THE UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS
LIBRARY
823
C43W
v. 2

CENTRAL CIRCULATION BOOKSTACKS

The person charging this material is responsible for its return to the library from which it was borrowed on or before the **Latest Date** stamped below.

Theft, mutilation, and underlining of books are reasons for disciplinary action and may result in dismissal from the University.

TO RENEW CALL TELEPHONE CENTER, 333-8400

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS LIBRARY AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

OCT 1 1 1993

OCT 0 3 1993

When renewing by phone, write new due date below previous due date.

L162

Concordia foll the Name fem.

FROM

THE PHARMACISTS OF GREAT BRITAIN

TO

THE CHICAGO COLLEGE OF PHARMACY.

1871–1872

WEALTH AND LABOUR.

WEALTH AND LABOUR.

A Novel.

BY LORD B * * * * * * *

AUTHOR OF "MASTERS AND WORKMEN," "FARCE OF LIFE," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL II.

LONDON:

THOMAS CAUTLEY NEWBY,

30, WELBECK STREET, CAVENDISH SQUARE.

1853.

WEALTH AND LABOUR.

CHAPTER I.

Mrs. Parkins was the daughter of a small tradesman in the town of S——, and in her youth, the families of tradesmen in country towns had an education very inferior to the showy one they now receive. Her father had been a dissenter; but Mrs. Parkins, on her marriage with a solicitor, in rising practice, was very ready to forsake her father's doctrines for those of the Church of England, which she fancied more genteel.

She was a silly, vulgar woman, full of pride and pretension; but, in spite of her love of show, she had, for many years, been obliged to

submit to her husband's parsimonious habits; even when Parkins became rich, he could not lay aside the paltry stinginess, which had become a habit; and whilst, to gratify his pride, his daughter spent what she pleased, he wore a great coat in his office, to save fire, till snow was on the ground, and walked about in all weathers to spare coach hire.

His wife had been so trained in this spirit, that their housekeeping, though very showy, was conducted in the most stingy manner; the servants were kept on the coarsest fare, in order that she might appropriate the money, allowed for their board, to make purchases for her own wardrobe. Though mean to all others, she was lavish on herself, and denied herself no indulgences. Amongst these might be counted the pleasures of the table, and as she took little exercise, and ate and drank grossly, she soon got exceedingly fat.

Such are the common effects of money, when it falls into the hands of persons of grovelling,

narrow minds, who have just received sufficient education to enable them to amass wealth, without their principles or their tastes and sentiments having been purified and elevated by early training. The man of talent, who has made an honest fortune by ability and industry, belongs to a different class.

Miss Parkins was a worthy descendent of such parents. At twenty, she was tall, stout, and coarse featured, with a profusion of black ringlets, and a muddy complexion. Yet, though exceedingly plain, she was resolved to be a beauty, and was always dressed in the extreme of, what she considered, the fashion.

She waltzed to her mother's admiration, though the old lady had felt some qualms of conscience, the first time she saw her whirling round in the arms of a captain of dragoons; she sang French vaudevilles, German ballads, and Italian bravuras—at least, it was believed

so, for nobody who listened to her ever understood a word; but that was of little consequence. She had the reputation of speaking the three languages, and no foreigner ever came there to dispute it.

Miss Parkins never did anything at home, but practise her songs, sit before a looking glass, or lie upon a sofa, unless some vulgar dandy came in to flirt with her, or a sentimental spinster to talk to her about lovers. Her temper was capricious and violent; and she treated her old mother with infinite contempt. Her father was the only person who could keep her at all in order.

Such was the destined wife of Mr. Oswald Mallory, the son of the oldest and proudest Baronet in the county, and, himself a haughty, self-willed scion of the aristocracy, who thought that his birth entitled him to marry the daughter of a duke.

Marriages for affection are out of fashion now-a-days. The luxury and extravagance

of both sexes make money—and a good deal of money—absolutely necessary to maintain what is called a suitable establishment, and fortunes must be ascertained, before hands or hearts are offered or accepted.

Certainly, nothing short of fifty thousand pounds, and the remembrance of his own and his father's embarrassments, could have induced Mr. Oswald Mallory, who prided himself on his taste for beauty, to pay even the slightest attention to Miss Parkins, the ugly grand-daughter of old Taylor the grocer.

But so explicit were the explanations of his father, Sir Thomas, as to the danger of offending the lawyer, by rejecting his daughter's hand, that he very sensibly, but most unwillingly, consented to dine with Mr. and Mrs. Parkins on the morrow.

As soon as this was known at the solicitor's Italian Villa, it threw the whole household into confusion.

A cook was hired for the day, to make

Mulligatawny soup, which Mrs. Parkins declared was the most genteel. A fish was ordered to be sent, by the express train, down from London, although they lived at the sea-side; and the servants were running about all day, to collect the delicacies of the season.

Mrs. Parkins would gladly have remained in the kitchen the whole morning, to see that the cook did not use too much butter; but Miss Parkins declared it was horridly ungenteel, and the woman would be sure to relate it in Sir Cuthbert Mogg's family, where she was stinted for nothing. So the poor lady contented herself with dusting the drawing-room furniture, and lamenting over the extravagance going on below stairs. She was somewhat consoled, however, by having the jelly made of raisin wine, and the pastry of salt butter, without her daughter discovering it.

"Nobody ever touched them," she said, "so it was of no consequence."

Miss Parkins spent all the morning of the

eventful day, in studying how she should appear to the best advantage. Sometimes, she thought of wearing blue, and sometimes pink. Once she resolved to shine as a Spanish beauty, in black and yellow; but finally, she decided on a white robe—white being the most appropriate for the occasion. She thought herself perfectly irresistible in a white silk, with a quantity of floating drapery, flounces up to her waist, and waving ringlets as long as the ears of a thoroughbred spaniel.

She would have preferred having Mr. Oswald all to herself, that nothing might prevent him showing her the most delicate attentions; but her father insisted, that a Miss Smith, an unmarried lady of five and forty, very respectably connected, should be invited. As it was decidedly necessary to have a gentleman to engage her attention, Mr. Brown, the curate of the parish, and a Dr. Pestel, the family physician, were added to the party.

The clergyman was a very stiff, inexperienced young man, in a white neckcloth, who thought himself most elegant and delightful; he likewise had an eye to the heiress.

In due time, Miss Parkins was seated in full dress, in a most interesting attitude, on an ottoman; Mrs. Parkins, with a very red face, and loaded with flowers and great beads, and flying ribands, perfectly filled an ample easy chair; and Mr. Parkins, in his best suit of black, walked quickly up and down the drawing-room, as impatient as the ladies, for the arrival of his guests.

All the satin chairs and gilt tables were uncovered; and there was a very strong smell of onions and curry powder.

Mr. Parkins pulled out his watch.

"Just seven, my dear," he said.

"I hope the fish wont be spoiled; it cost twenty shillings, with the lobster for sauce," answered his wife.

Miss Parkins, whose stays were very tight, heaved a very deep sigh. Her nose was getting almost as red as her mother's.

Presently, there was a tremendous rap at the street door. The ladies were in a flutter of expectation; but their looks became very blank, when only poor Miss Smith was announced.

"How do you do, dear," was the salutation with which mother and daughter condescended to receive her; but Mr. Parkins took care to provide her with a chair, to prevent her taking the place on the ottoman, near her dear Miss Parkins, which that young lady had reserved for Mr. Oswald.

Next came the stiff curate, who having had a great uncle a dean, considered he was very condescending to accept such an invitation. There had been, however, two inducements to do so, which he could not resist; the hope of winning Miss Parkins's fortune, and the certainty of enjoying Mr. Parkins's good

dinner. He was proudly courteous, and evidently thought himself the great man of the party.

He was standing, as he conceived, very gracefully, before his young hostess, busily occupied in pushing up the fingers of his white gloves, and laughing, to show his strong teeth, in answer to every observation she made, when he was a good deal disconcerted, by hearing the name of Mr. Oswald Mallory announced.

Poor young man! like a butterfly in a shower, his wings were closed in an instant. He felt he was nobody, in the presence of the Baronet's eldest son, and moved away to take a seat next Miss Smith, whilst Oswald shook hands with Miss Parkins, and quietly took possession of the place, reserved for him at her side. It was not, that he at all liked doing so, but convinced, by a recent conversation with his father, of the necessity for taking her to wife, he considered it advisable to put the best possible face upon the matter, in order to make

the bargain on the most advantageous terms. He was enraged, also, for a time, against Mary Thornton, and cared not to whom he paid his addresses.

The young lady was delighted with his evident attention; the cadaverous face of her father, relaxed into an almost imperceptible smile of triumph, and the young curate felt prodigiously jealous.

Dinner was announced, immediately after the arrival of Dr. Pestel, who offered his arm to conduct the lady of the house down stairs. Oswald Mallory stood up with Miss Parkins, and the elegant Mr. Brown had been unwillingly assigned to Miss Smith, when there was another loud knock at the door.

"My dear, do you expect any other friend?" inquired the hostess, of her husband.

"I cannot say I do," replied Mr. Parkins. "But, perhaps, we had better wait a moment."

A sad misgiving made him feel exceedingly anxious and uncomfortable.

There was rather an awkward pause, till a servant came up-stairs, and entering the drawing-room, announced Captain Blake.

The attorney muttered a very coarse expression between his teeth, but, luckily, no one heard it, for their attention was engrossed by the entrance of the stranger, who, full dressed, in a very gay, striped, velvet waistcoat, and a great many gold chains and shirt studs, came into the room, with the most familiar audacity. He bowed to Mrs. Parkins, shook hands with her husband, and apologized for being a little past the time, with a most complacent smile.

Never had the attorney's consummate powers of hypocrisy been more put to the test. He wished the Captain sunk in one of his own ships, at the bottom of the Atlantic; and yet he was so entirely in his power, that he was obliged to appear exceedingly glad to see him

"I thought, my dear, you told me, you expected Captain Blake to-morrow," said Mrs. Parkins, who knowing the circumstances which had caused dissension between the seaman and his wife's family, thought him most improper company for her future son-in-law, although Blake was his uncle by marriage.

"Yes, to-morrow, I understood," stammered Parkins, with considerable embarrassment.

"Oh, if it is all the same to you, it is quite immaterial to me!" said Blake, with a coarse laugh. "I have no fear of finding short commons; and, if you have no Madeira upstairs, I don't doubt, your wine is quite as good out of one bin as another."

The attorney tried to assure his guest, that he was welcome at all times; but the words stuck in his throat. Blake, however, did not choose to observe, that there was anything amiss, and turning to Oswald, held out his hand, and declared, he was monstrously glad to

see him. But Mallory bowed very haughtily, and led Miss Parkins down stairs.

"That horrid man, what can have brought him here!" murmured the young lady, as they descended.

"You don't know him, then," replied Oswald, in the same low tone.

"Not in the least! I suppose, he is some business acquaintance of my father's," said Miss Parkins, with infinite disdain. "I always keep out of the way, when I hear that such vulgar creatures are coming to the house."

"He is a man who ought never to enter a lady's presence," returned Mallory.

"I will give you both warning, then, before I dine here again," said Blake, who, close behind them, had heard every word of this conversation.

As he passed them, to take his place at the dinner table, his dark eyes rested on the young lady and Oswald, for an instant, with an ex-

pression, which Miss Parkins, though she had no lack of courage, shuddered to remember.

When the party was all seated at the hospitable board, Oswald looked around him! there was plate and china enough to have graced the table of a peer.

"Poor people," thought the spendthrift aristocrat, "you little know how utterly the great despise you, how they laugh at all your attempts to imitate them, or you would spare yourselves the trouble."

The mistress of the house had been at great pains to select guests of sufficient gentility to meet the Baronet's eldest son; and she had flattered herself that he would return home, convinced that the mother of his future bride knew how to do things properly. But the intrusion of Blake had destroyed all such happy anticipations, and overwhelmed with confusion, she quite forgot to pay him that attention which even ordinary politeness made incumbent on her, in her own house.

But Captain Blake's audacity was equal to any emergency. He thoroughly enjoyed the dismay he had occasioned, and perfectly understood its cause; and his eyes twinkled with something like the expression of a slumbering tiger, when he thought how easily he could be revenged if he desired it.

Mr. Parkins was the only one in company who knew the danger of provoking him, and having regained his presence of mind, he endeavoured, as much as he could, to make up by an appearance of frank cordiality for his wife's neglect of her unbidden guest, and the insolence of his daughter and Mr. Oswald Mallory towards him.

Miss Smith, who had not been five minutes in the Captain's company before she considered the possibility of making a conquest of him, and the physician, who was a very great talker, came very opportunely to his assistance, until the ladies left the dining-room.

Oswald and the stiff curate murmured in a

low voice to each other, for about five minutes afterwards, and then arose and followed their hostess to the drawing-room.

The sneer on Blake's face as they departed, did not escape the observation of Mr. Parkins. It made him feel exceedingly uncomfortable. The attorney was not a coward; but although his experience of ordinary life was very great, there was an obstinate determination and reckless daring about Blake, which, when united with his recently expressed sentiments of honour, and an indistinct knowledge of his pursuits and exploits, threw a mystery and a power about him, for beyond his subtlety to understand or his caution to calculate on. And the cunning civilian felt a secret awe of the dauntless sailor, which he scarcely liked to acknowledge, even to himself.

Blake knew mankind too well to be deceived by the lawyer's urbanity; but he liked to make him cringe to him.

"A fine young man, that, and from all I

hear of him, likely to make an excellent husband," he said, after the short pause, which followed the departure of Oswald Mallory. "Your daughter will be a happy young woman."

So solemn was the tone of mockery in which this was uttered, that it was impossible to resent the sarcasm, and though Parkins understood what was implied, he could only smile, and say that Captain Blake was somewhat premature in his conclusions, as the young people were not yet engaged.

"But it is a settled affair, no doubt," said the seaman. "The Mallorys want money, and you have it, Mr. Parkins. It is quite certain, when you see a proud aristocrat making love to a grocer's granddaughter, there must be money in the case. It is very kind of clever men, like you, to toil all their days, for the sake of repairing the fortunes of an idle gentleman, who would not enter your doors, if he did not want your money."

"Indeed, Captain Blake, you must permit me to say you are under a very great mistake," stammered Parkins, his pale face becoming yet paler with rage.

"Am I?" said his guest, and then swallowed a bumper of Port. "Perhaps I am also under a mistake, when I say that this Mr. Oswald Mallory has been making love to Miss Thornton, the daughter of the Custom-house Officer, for three years at least, and would run off with her to-morrow, if the girl would listen to him. You know, probably, why he has so suddenly given her up, to pay his addresses to your daughter."

"These are matters which I trust you will allow me to say, do not in the least concern you!" said Parkins, who could no longer command his impatience. "With your permission, Captain Blake, we will speak on some other topic."

"Just as you please," answered his guest, with great indifference. "Perhaps you will

be so kind as to tell me if Sir Thomas Mallory ever informed you that he had been in the navy?"

"It is a fact known to all the world," returned Parkins. "Before he inherited the title and estates of his uncle, you must be aware, he served fifteen years."

"He was at one time, I believe, on board the Avenger?" said Blake, coolly.

"I have heard he was two years in that vessel; but it was before I be came acquainted with him," rejoined the Attorney.

"He had been only six months on board, when I left it," answered the Captain.

"Oh, yes, I remember," murmured Parkins. "He once told me so."

"Did he?" said Blake. "I am glad to find his memory is still so good. Mr. Oswald Mallory appears to have forgotten that my wife was his aunt. But I won't detain you longer, from the agreeable party up stairs."

"Wont you join them?" asked Parkins,

though he wondered at his own courage in do ing so.

"You are very kind!" was the reply, "but I wont intrude on the lovers. I have particular business in the town. Good night to you. I shall find you at the office, to-morrow, I suppose, at ten o'clock. Good night to you."

To the inexpressible relief of the lawyer, Blake then departed.

When Mr. Parkins and the physician entered the drawing-room, Miss Parkins was screaming a German ballad, at the top of her harsh voice, to Mr. Oswald Mallory, who resolving in his secret soul, that she should never sing another note after they were married, stood by, and smiled with tender admiration.

"Is that fellow gone?" were the first words the young gentleman addressed to the attorney, when he appeared in the drawing-room.

"Yes, thank heaven!" was the reply. "I trust he will never enter this house again."

"You will do well to prevent a repetition of his visits, if you can," rejoined Oswald. "I have heard my father say he was, from boyhood, a violent, intractable fellow. At length he was brought to a court-martial, for insubordination, accompanied by very aggravating circumstances, and though my father was his brother-in-law, his sense of justice compelled him to give such evidence against him, that he was dismissed the service."

"In consequence of your father's evidence?" repeated Parkins. "That was unpleasant, very, and accounts for his rudeness to you."

"Oh, yes. But Sir Thomas and he had previously had many disputes," replied Mallory. "He had behaved very ill to my aunt, and in consequence of his overbearing temper, every officer on board the same ship was glad to get rid of him. I have heard that he became, afterwards, the commander of a privateer or something of that sort; but no one seems

exactly to know his history, since he left England. His return is an exceedingly unpleasant circumstance to our family."

"Oh, Mr. Oswald, to a family which stands so high as yours," said the attorney, "it can signify little. There is no family, however noble, that has not one black sheep in the flock, or a skeleton in the closet, as somebody calls these unfortunate members of the community. For my part, though people have accused Blake of smuggling, I don't believe a word of it. He has been a trader, that is quite certain. I have had some affairs, connected with the disposal of his property in this country, to transact for him, and I must say, I have found him very honourable in his dealings with me. He is a disappointed man, and is therefore much embittered, but I don't believe that there is really anything very wrong about him."

"I should not like to answer for that;" replied Oswald, "and certainly from the little I

have seen of him, to-day, I should be sorry to find myself again in his company."

Miss Parkins protested that Blake was a horrible monster, and she could not have survived another half-hour in his presence. Miss Smith smiled her approbation of this sentiment, and softly echoed the word monster. Mrs. Parkins completed the chorus, by declaring her wonder that her husband could be decently civil to such a low-bred fellow."

"If you knew him, as well as I do, my dear," answered the lawyer, "you would try to do the same. Captain Blake is a dangerous man to treat with impertinence."

"I should like to give him a good horse-whipping," said Mr. Oswald, looking exceedingly fierce, and the image of his brother Edward darted across his mind, at the same moment.

Miss Parkins watched his flashing eyes, and thought him divinely handsome. With the softest voice, she implored him, for her sake, not to expose himself needlessly to danger.

He pressed her hand, and begged to be allowed to call the next morning with a new song which he felt quite certain she would sing as well as Grisi herself.

This request being granted, with well affected modesty, by Miss Parkins, Mr. Oswald Mallory took his leave.

The door had scarcely closed after him, when the ladies commenced his praises with one accord; and all declared he was the most perfect gentleman they had ever been in company with.

"When he calls to-morrow, he will certainly propose, my dear," said poor Miss Smith, who had never had an offer in her life.

Miss Parkins denied the possibility of such a thing, though she had not, in her own mind, the slightest doubt of it. And in this delightful expectation, she retired to rest, and dreamt of being married, and going to court in a hearse driven by Captain Blake.

CHAPTER II.

On the day after Mr. Parkins's dinner party, when Mr. Thornton returned from his office, at one o'clock, he found Edward Mallory conversing with his daughter, in the parlour. With his old habits of hospitality, he insisted on his partaking of the simple dinner, which was shortly afterwards served up.

Edward accepted the invitation with pleasure, and the Custom-House Officer delighted to have a companion at table, sat down in high spirits. He made no apology for the humbleness of the fare, nor indeed was it necessary, for though very plain, everything was well cooked, and neatly arranged.

Thornton was too hungry, and too much

occupied in discussing the news of the day, to observe the unusual embarrassment of his daughter, whilst she did the honours of the table, and he was somewhat surprised, when, soon after the cloth was withdrawn, his guest requested to speak with him in private.

He immediately made a sign to Mary, to leave the room, which blushing deeply, she obeyed in silence, and when she had disappeared, Thornton asked Edward, in a jovial manner, what little affair he had to communicate to him.

His astonishment was much increased, when Edward Mallory, in reply to this question, informed him of his long attachment to his daughter, and requested his consent to their marriage, before he returned to America.

Mr. Thornton, at first made no answer, he seemed unaccountably confused, by this sudden proposal, and endeavoured to avoid giving any direct reply. But Edward was too much in earnest, to be easily turned from his purpose.

The suspense in which he had lived for years, was no longer to be supported, now that he was assured of Mary's love, and he had resolved to do every thing in his power, to bring it to a speedy conclusion.

He was aware, he said, that his brother Oswald had been rejected; but he understood, that Miss Thornton had not favoured his suit. If Mr. Thornton had any objection to the proposal he had now made, he begged him to be candid, and state it at once, for it was a subject, on which he could not support uncertainty.

"There are circumstances which prevent my giving you a hasty answer," said his host, in great confusion. "In fact, if I must speak plainly, there is a person, whom I must consult before I can say anything decided. The disposal of a daughter in marriage, is not a light matter, Mr. Edward."

"Surely, sir," returned the young man, "you are at liberty to bestow your own child, on whom you please, and when you please."

"Oh, yes, certainly—to be sure," stammered Mr. Thornton.

"May I hope, that my suit is not disagreeable to you?" enquired Edward, with increased surprise and agitation.

"Indeed, Mr. Mallory, you must give me time," was the reply. "You have taken me by surprise; this going to America is an awkward thing—and then, some people are ambitious you know. Most fathers expect a man to have a certain fortune now, before he undertakes to keep a wife."

"I am not without the means to maintain your daughter, or I should not have ventured to seek Miss Thornton's love," answered the gentleman, somewhat proudly.

"What you consider the means, at least," returned Thornton, quickly. "But ideas differ on that point. Indeed, as I said before, you must allow me time for consideration; I cannot give you a positive answer, until I have consulted a friend. Mary is very young, she is

a pretty girl, and really before I consent to let her go to America, there are a great many things, may be said on the subject.

"I hope, by whatever motives you may be influenced," said Edward, anxiously, "you will take some account, of the regard, which Miss Thornton has confessed she entertains for me."

"Oh, certainly!" said the Custom House Officer; "my only wish is, to promote her happiness; I have never attempted to control her choice. I am not influenced by any interested motives, believe me. Though your brother long persevered in his addresses, as soon, as I understood that they were not acceptable to her—that she hated him, in fact—I closed my doors against him; yet, certainly, you must admit, that he would have been a better match for her, than his younger brother."

"If you mean, in a worldly point of view, and as regards money, I very much doubt it,"

was the reply. "His inheritance is already dissipated; his habits are most expensive; and he has no means of earning a livelihood, when other resources are exhausted. My little capital, on the contrary, is every year increasing, and, were all lost to-morrow, I should have no difficulty in supporting a wife and family, by my own industry."

"What you say, is very true," returned Thornton. "I know you to be a very sensible, active, young man, who goes with the times, and thinks it no disgrace to work. There are people of your own class, who would despise you, for having become one of the workers, when your birth entitled you, to be one of the drones of the hive. But I am not of that number. I have been obliged to do the same myself, or I might have starved, in spite of my fine relations, who never gave me a sixpence. I tell you candidly, therefore, I would rather confide my daughter's happiness to your keeping, than see her the wife of a proud, selfish,

and unprincipled man of fashion, who though he can dissipate a fortune disgracefully, is as incapable of making one, and as ignorant, as his father's groom. Sir Thomas despised my alliance, but I rejected his—and I care no more for a worthless fellow, however high his family may be, than I do for a shoeblack."

"This is encouraging to my hopes," replied Edward, who listened to Thornton's flow of words with amazement, and thought the while, how truly he had been described by those, who said he could talk, but not act.

"It may be so," said the Custom-House Officer. "Indeed I have no wish to damp your hopes, but I have a very particular reason, for not giving you a more decided answer, to-day. Come to me on Saturday, Mr. Mallory, at the same hour, and I hope to be able to do so."

"And in the mean time, may I be permitted to visit Miss Thornton?" demanded the young man, eagerly.

"Certainly—certainly—you are old friends," was the answer to this demand. "I cannot suppose, that any one can see the least impropriety, in your calling at my house, nor do I anticipate, that there will be any reason for your ceasing to do so. But, dear me, the clock strikes three; I am too late for my office, already, I have not a moment to loose, so, will you be so good, as to tell Mary what has passed between us; for really I must be off. Good morning—good morning. Don't forget to come again on Saturday."

So saying, the Custom-House Officer, snatched up his hat, and left the house with the utmost rapidity.

It struck Edward, that he was glad to have an excuse, to escape, from further conversation. During their whole interview, there had been an embarrassment, and uneasy restlessness in his manner, which had excited the young man's astonishment, and was by no means flattering to his self-love. Mr. Thornton had never, at

any time, manifested so strong an affection for his daughter, as to make it probable, that he would be unwilling to part with her, when an opportunity offered of her making a respectable marriage, and Mr. Edward Mallory had, without vanity, a right to suppose, that he might be regarded as a very unobjectionable match, for the daughter of the Custom-House Officer.

But in this affair it was evident that although Thornton was usually imprudent, almost to rashness, he was under some mysterious restraint, which compelled him to temporise.

It was in vain, that Edward sought from Mary Thornton, some explanation of her father's unexpected conduct: she was both disappointed and surprised, when he recounted to her, the result of an interview, from which, they had both confidently anticipated, a full and prompt approbation of their engagement; but she was totally unable to divine, what reason could exist for delay.

"I know, she added," that secret, nocturnal visitors, at times come to our house, but I have never hitherto suspected, that these mysteries concerned me in the least. My father disapproved of my receiving Mr. Oswald's addresses, for he knew, I disliked him, and he was well aware of his dissipated character; but he has always loved you, as a son."

"And I told him, that you had confessed your regard for me," said Mallory, here in terrupting the blushing girl, who greatly embarrassed, looked down in silence. "In fact, he made no personal objections to me, but he spoke of there being some one, whom he must consult, before he could venture to give me a decided answer. Have you any idea, who is likely to be his adviser, in such a case?"

"Mr. Gerard is the only person I know," replied Mary, "whose judgment he entirely confides in."

"Then, I have no cause to apprehend a re-

fusal," said Edward, smiling, "for Mr. Gerard is already my friend; so I hope that you may soon begin to prepare your wedding clothes, and that you will not be unwilling to sail for America, in less than a month."

"But if my father has to ask Mr. Gerard's advice, I fear there will be longer delay than you expect," answered the girl. "He went yesterday evening to London, on business, and I heard, that he was not likely to return, till the day fixed for Mathew Fuller's examination."

At this moment, the little dog which had hitherto lain quietly at Mary's feet, began to bark furiously, awakened Lilly, who had been sleeping on the sofa, and ran backwards and forwards, between his mistress and the door, as if to denounce the proximity, of some improper intruder.

When he was at length appeased, the deep sound of a man's voice, was audible in the passage, disputing with the servant Nelly.

Miss Thornton turned deadly pale, and in-

voluntarily, laid her hand on Edward's arm, whilst she gazed anxiously towards the door. Mallory saw that she trembled from head to foot.

There was a pause of troubled silence, during which it was evident, that the girl suffered all the intense agony of anxious terror, and her dress fluttered from the palpitation of her heart.

"What does this mean, dearest?" inquired Edward, gazing at her, with deep interest and curiosity. "Surely you need fear no one, whilst I am near you."

"Oh, Mr. Mallory," she murmured, in a low voice, when the dispute without was renewed, "it is a creditor—one of my father's creditors; they come daily, now; I know not how it can end, for I fear, his resources were exhausted, long ago."

"Shall I go, and speak to the man," was her companion's kind reply.

"Oh, no, no, they don't want any more

promises; they are tired of that," she cried, "they want money, and we have none to give them. But hush—hush—he is going away. Nelly understands wonderfully how to manage; if it were not for that, I know not what would become of me; and yet, I should be used to it, by this time," and she laughed hysterically, "but I am weak, and foolish; I dread them, as if they had my life in their power. It is very strange, my father never disturbs himself about them; he makes a joke of it, when I tell him, that some of these impatient creditors have been here again. The only effect I can ever perceive such trials produce on him is, that he drinks more. It must end badly, Mr. Mallory; it must end badly."

When she ceased speaking, she hid her face in her hands, and wept.

"Don't make yourself unhappy, dearest Mary," said her lover tenderly. "No ill shall happen to you, whilst I am here."

"Ah, Mr. Edward," she returned, with deep

despondency in her looks and voice, "I fear you have come too late to save my father from utter ruin. He never could take care of money, and, during the last year, he has become quite reckless. I am afraid Mr. Parkins has led him on into some railway gambling, and that he has lost. I fear he is in this lawyer's debt, and he is a hard, grasping man, though he pretends to be my father's friend. I have seen him come to the house in the depth of the night, and I always feared there must be something wrong, where such secresy was found necessary."

"Perhaps I may be able to assist your father to compromise his debts," said Edward.

"Oh, no—no—no!" cried the girl, eagerly. "You shall never involve yourself in trouble on my account, Mr. Mallory. Indeed—indeed—you had better go back to America at once, and leave me to struggle on as I can."

"Mary—Mary," returned her lover, with deep emotion, "I have no interests in which

you are not concerned; I have no hopes of which you are not the object; and there is not a power on earth can induce me to leave you unprotected, in your present terrible position."

Miss Thornton could not answer; but she pressed her lips on Edward's hand, with a feeling of unutterable gratitude.

"Oh, Mr. Edward," she said, after a pause, "I ought to overcome all fears, now that I am assured of your regard; but I have so long felt the dreary pain of loneliness, that I cannot, at once, overcome my old apprehensions of evils, from which, for years, I have had no one to defend me."

"But, perhaps, your father's affairs are not in so desperate a state as you imagine'" rejoined Mallory, "and with my knowledge of business, I might be able to make some arrangement without any great sacrifice of money."

"As long as he goes on drinking as he has

done lately, it must be impossible to save him," was Mary's reply. "He yields daily, more and more, to this fearful vice, and he has, during the last month, gone more than once to his office in so excited a state, that it could not fail to be observed."

"Is it possible that he can be thus imprudent?" demanded the young man, anxiously.

"The agony I felt when I first discovered this, I cannot describe to you," answered Miss Thornton, in tremulous accents. "I scarcely ventured to acknowledge my poor father's weakness to myself. I could not betray it to any human being but you. Yet I dared not remonstrate with him, though I felt, that if he persisted in the same course, he must inevitably be dismissed from his office, without character, and without hope of other employment. Nay, even now, when you are near to succour and advise, I see no way by which such consequences can be averted. He has gone on, on

credit, till his debts have made him reckless and desperate."

"Ah, this credit system is the ruin of many an honest man," returned Mallory. "It is one of the most destructive gangrenes of society, at the present day. I confess that, from all I have heard of Mr. Thornton, he had always a taste for gambling speculations, and every kind of excitement. It was the cause of his failure, when engaged in commerce, and it is a habit, which, like that of drinking, ever gains strength by indulgence, till, having brought a man to the very brink of ruin, it becomes little short of madness."

"Oh, Mr. Mallory," said Mary, looking anxiously in her companion's face, with that sweet imploring expression of trusting dependence, which flatters men the most, as being an involuntary tribute to their strength and power, "what can be done to arrest my father in his desperate course? If he perseveres, he may be dismissed from his office at a moment's

notice, and, I feel certain, he would never survive that disgrace. Perhaps, if you would warn him of the danger he incurs, it might arouse him in time. He is more likely to listen to you than to any one else."

"But I, of all men, would least like to incur the risk of offending him," answered the young man, looking down on Mary's innocent countenance with a glance of infinite love. "Most gladly would I do anything in my power to save you a moment's uneas ness; but is there no older friend—no one more privileged to give advice, and from whom it would come with a better grace, than from me?"

"Mr. Gerard would, I have no doubt, do his utmost to assist me," returned the girl; "but he is from home. Captain Sayers is sincerely attached to my father—but—"

"Why do you hesitate?" demanded Edward, eagerly.

"Because, though Captain Sayers is a very

worthy man," she replied, "he can lecture my father with a very ill grace against the sin of drinking."

"Oh, I remember," exclaimed the young man, laughing, "he is an old navy officer, and has a professional predilection for strong potations. But I will talk with him, nevertheless, on the subject. He probably knows more of his friend's affairs than either you or I do, and, I have little doubt, will be able, in some way, to render us assistance."

Mary readily agreed to this proposition; and as the hour was approaching when the old commander usually came to join her tea-table, and play backgammon with the Custom-House Officer, she advised Mr. Mallory to call on him without delay, so as to have a private conversation with him before he left home.

With cheering words of affection, the young man parted from his betrothed; but her heart was too heavy even to be thus comforted. It was not only the embarrassed state of her

father's affairs which caused her anxiety; but she dreaded, more than she had dared to express, the consequences of Oswald Mallory's jealousy of his brother, and she shrunk, with extreme pain, from the conviction of having unconsciously been the cause of exciting a deeper hate, and fiercer stife, between them. The youthful cheerfulness and elasticity of spirit, with which she had hitherto endeavoured to put away from her all terrors of misfortune, and had fluttered joyfully on, extracting, often, the sweetest honey from the bitterest flowers, the trusting gaiety of inexperience had suddenly deserted her! A deep passion was awakened in her heart, for the first time: an earnest and a solemn sense of the stern realities of existence had suddenly changed her whole character, and she felt, that her life was never more to ripple smoothly on in the light of hope and fancy. She was, thenceforward, the guardian of another's happiness, and her own

identity was to be lost in her devotion to the wedded companion of her life.

Strange, and half bewildering, was the girl's consciousness of this change in her position; but still it brought exultation and solemn joy; and she not only prayed to heaven to direct her in the discharge of the duties of her new life, but she returned thanks, that she had been chosen to share the love, and alleviate the sorrows of a noble minded, honest man.

There was a high and holy beauty in her innocent face as her eyes glistening with tears, and a sweet smile parting her lips, she sat silently, with her hands clasped above the forgotten work on her knee; even little Lilly felt its influence, and leaving the dog, and the parrot, she crept softly up to her, and flinging her arms round her neck, kissed her with warm affection.

"Don't cry, Miss Thornton," she said. "That good Mr. Edward will come back again soon, and bring father, I know he will, and

then we shall all be happy, and I shall be quite well again; and I will dance the new hornpipe, and you shall come to the playhouse with a free ticket to see me. Oh, father will be so glad."

"I hope we shall do something better than that, dear Lilly," answered the lady, smiling, in spite of her own anxieties; and she stroked the little girl's glossy hair, with gentle love. "You shall learn more useful things than dancing; and neither you nor your father shall ever go into any of those miserable theatres again."

"But indeed, ma'am, it was very beautiful, and I liked to hear the people clap me and father, very much," said Lilly, looking somewhat confused, and very much disappointed; "and then, father always said, I must starve if he did not bring me up to the stage; for that he should not be able to act long, and I should have to keep him."

"But your father has found friends now, who will not allow either of you to starve," answered Mary, wisely forbearing to dispute with her young companion, as to the charms of the theatre, till she had acquired other tastes.

"And when will father come back again?" inquired Lilly, as she had done some fifty times before.

"To-morrow, or the day after, I trust," said Miss Thornton.

"And you will let me stay with you, till then, ma'am?" demanded the child.

"Yes, certainly."

"And after that, I shall go to father! Oh, I do so love father!"

"Your father will come to you here," was the lady's gentle answer.

The little girl jumped up, and clapped her hands, and her eyes sparkled so brightly, with an expression of extreme joy, that Mary

bent down and kissed her, with the happy conviction, that love can purify and exalt the mind above all selfish feelings, even amidst the most abject and neglected children of poverty.

CHAPTER III.

The house inhabited by Captain Sayers, and an old woman, who was honoured by the title of his housekeeper, lay a little way out of the town. Not near the fashionable quarter, frequented by sea bathers and the rich traders, who no longer live over their counting-houses, but in close proximity to the busy, smoking, labouring neighbourhood, where all the wealth is made, which is spent in the flaunting terraces on the cliffs above. The Commander's dwelling overlooked the lower town, where an enormous population of hard-working men and their families is densely packed together, in squalid alleys and crowded lanes, denied even the enjoyment of fresh air,

which can never penetrate into those wretched dens and cellars.

But the sea breezes blew strong against the cliff where Captain Sayers had fixed his residence, in a small, square, red-brick house. This was indeed its chief recommendation to the old Commander, who had lived too long on the water to care either about trees or green fields.

Neither a porch, nor any inequality whatever, except a water spout, cast a shadow across the glaring sunshine, reflected from its walls and windows. The walk up its white-railed garden, was formed of coal dust, which contrasted strongly with an edging of oyster-shells dividing it from a border of very stunted wall-flowers and glaring poppies, and altogether, though the whole place was studiously neat, it had a monotonous and pinched appearance, which forcibly recalled to the beholder's mind, a goose which has recently been divested of its feathers.

Edward Mallory knew it well, for he had often been admitted, when a boy, by the Captain, to take a peep through his telescope. When he arrived there, in compliance with his promise to Mary Thornton, he found nothing altered since those long past days, and Captain Sayers arose from the identical telescope, as if he had done nothing else but look through it for fifty years at least.

The checked carpet, the wooden arm-chairs, the shells, the stuffed birds on the chimney-piece, the backgammon board, and the Bible on the little tea-table, and the very strong smell of tobacco, were all the same, as formerly; only a little the worse for wear; and even the worthy Captain had been so leniently touched by the hand of time, that he was scarcely altered.

"Glad to see you, Mr. Edward, very glad to see you," he said, cordially shaking hands with his visitor. "It appears quite like old times, to have you here again, sir. And yet, I

grieve to say, that many things are sadly altered, for the worse, since we last met. What with steam by land, and steam by water, we are in a fair way to be blown up altogether."

"Many, on the contrary, consider that steam is the greatest discovery of modern times, and a universal benefit to the whole human race," said Edward, with a smile, at the old man's prejudice.

"Yes, sir, yes," cried the Captain, his face becoming very red, "I know there are people who think very differently from me on this point; in fact, on many points; but every sensible man must understand the danger of an artificial state. To speak plain, sir, the fact is, that we don't stand on our own bottom! We eat foreign corn, we trade in foreign ships, we admit foreign goods, we learn foreign languages. Sir, it cannot last. In old England —sterling old England—we baked our own corn, we brewed our own beer, we traded in our own ships, and we spoke our own language,

sir! Sailors were protected, farmers were protected, manufacturers were protected; everybody was protected. But that is all over now, sir. Even the country is unprotected."

"Surely all the steamers around our coast are sufficient for its defence," said Mr. Mallory, who saw he must let the Captain exhaust his favourite topic, before he expected him to listen to him concerning any other subject.

"Her gallant men-of-war were once the glory of old England," he returned with extreme eagerness. "I defy you, sir, to prove that there was a single steamer at the battle of Trafalgar. No, sir, we wanted no steam there to assist our national defenders; our fire and smoke sufficed to give the Frenchmen a pretty lesson, without steam being at all necessary. Those were days, sir! the glorious days of old England, when I stood on board the Victory, and saw the French flag hauled down, and England's banner hoisted in its place."

"It was, no doubt, a gallant spectacle," an-

swered the young man; "but I believe that Englishmen would fight as bravely now, in defence of their country, and thousands would meet death in a just cause, with a tranquil, moral courage, not surpassed even by that of the great Nelson."

"Sir, you are flattering, very flattering," answered the Captain, taking the compliment to himself and his profession; and he wiped his face with his red, spotted pocket-handkerchief, to conceal his blushes. "I, for my part, am ever ready to the call of duty—always ready, when my country requires my aid—but men of my standing, have not a proper chance, sir—we are set aside, sir, altogether set aside! Nothing but boys take the lead! and what with their new navigation charts which are to be bought for an old song, and mathematics, and I cannot tell what, we men of the last war, are only considered to be ignorant old blockheads. That is the truth of the case, sir! It is an artificial state."

"There are many abuses, certainly," said Edward, "but only knowledge and science can correct them."

"Oh, yes, knowledge," echoed Sayers. "My friend Mr. Thornton, is an admirer of knowledge, and steam, and so forth; he is always talking about art; but I am a plain man, and for my part I prefer nature. I love the water, sir, but I don't want to have it boiled, eh, eh." And the Captain laughed at his own joke, which he had made fifty times before, till his red pocket-handkerchief was again necessary to wipe the tears from his cheeks.

"Yet you and Mr. Thornton are very good friends," said Mallory, delighted at last, to find an opportunity of introducing the subject, he had come there to speak upon.

"Oh, yes, excellent friends!" returned the Captain; "all the better friends because we frequently differ. He is fond of novelty; foolishly fond of novelty; and on some points

it is absolutely impossible to make him listen to reason."

"But Miss Thornton informed me," rejoined the young man, "that if any one can make her father listen to reason, it is yourself, Captain Sayers."

"Flattering, sir—very flattering," said the worthy man, taking snuff, and again applying the red cotton handkerchief to his face.

"Under this impression," continued Mallory, "she has deputed me, as an old friend of the family, to solicit your assistance in a matter of vital importance to her father's future welfare, nay, I may say, even to his existence."

"You astonish me, Mr. Edward," cried Sayers, his vanity and his curiosity both at the same time, in a most pleasing state of excitement. "What can I do in such a case? You must already know that you and Miss Thornton can at all times command my services."

"The subject is one of delicacy," said the young man, with slight hesitation; "but I

think I need hardly mention to you that our friend has an unfortunate weakness; a man of your discernment must have observed his propensity, to indulge somewhat freely in the use of strong potations."

Captain Sayers's red face became many shades deeper in its crimson hue; he looked exceedingly confused, and took snuff rapidly, three times. He felt for his handkerchief, it had fallen to the ground.

"Yes," he said, with as innocent a look as he could assume, "he is rather too fond of brandy-and-water. I have often told him if he would take rum it would agree much better with his constitution."

"I believe," answered Edward, very gravely, "it would agree much better with his purse if he took neither. The fact is, Captain Sayers, your old friend is on the eve of ruin. To drown the painful consciousness of his embarrassments, he has indulged in habits of drinking, to such excess, that he has already received one repri-

mand from his office, and on a repetition of the fault, will, in all probability, be dismissed, and thus deprived of his only means of support. His daughter feels that as an old friend, you may yet be able to arouse him to a sense of the danger to which he exposes himself, and thus to prevent his, otherwise, inevitable destruction."

"This is very bad news, indeed, sir," replied the Captain, clearing his throat, and tapping the lid of his snuff box. "I always feared my friend's imprudent love of novelty, would bring him into difficulties. Steam, sir! all steam. Men may differ on many points, but all must agree, that where one has made a fortune by railroads, a hundred have been ruined. And Mr. Thornton is one of the latter, I fear. I have told him, a hundred times, how it would be, in the end!" said the Captain, who, although a good natured man, could not help feeling a little elated at such a strong proof of his own

sagacity, even, when the accomplishment of his prophecy was his friend's ruin.

"Though he may have lost the whole of his private fortune," rejoined the young man, "he cannot starve, as long as he retains his office in the Custom-House. And everything must be done to prevent his being turned off."

"Certainly, sir! I understand," responded the old Commander with some embarrassment, "I am going down to his house this evening, if Miss Thornton desires it, and if she will just go out of the parlour, a short time, I will speak to him, on the subject. He cannot be offended I should think; yet it is a delicate matter, Mr. Edward, a very delicate matter; and to tell you the truth, we have drank so many glasses of grog together, that I feel rather awkward, as to talking to him about sobriety."

"But think of his danger! remember his poor daughter," said Mallory, earnestly.

"Yes, sir, yes! I am indeed truly dis-

tressed for them both," returned the old man. "I will take courage in a good cause, and do all in my power to bring Thornton to reason. But I have little hope of success, sir. A warm glass of grog in an evening is an excellent thing, a very excellent thing; but it requires discretion. If once a man allows his thirst to grow upon him, sir, it goes on increasing rapidly, till it masters him completely; as the sea did the Royal George, when it rushed in at every port-hole. Advice, in such a case, is nearly as useless as a mop when a vessel springs a leak. But I'll try, sir, I'll try what can be done, if it is only for the sake of the girl."

"Captain," said the housekeeper, looking into the parlour, "if you please there is a gen-man at the door, who wants to speak to you. He says he wont detain you five minutes, sir."

"Show him in!" answered her master, quickly. "Show him in. You will excuse it,

Mr. Mallory, Don't you know him, Mary?"

"No, sir, I never saw him before, to my knowledge," answered the servant.

"Very odd, indeed—a very odd coincidence," responded the Captain, whose faculties seemed perfectly bewildered, by the arrival of two visitors on the same afternoon.

"He is quite a stranger, sir," added the housekeeper, "but he says he must speak a few words in private, with you, and he would not come into the parlour, when he heard another gentleman was here."

"Pray do not let me detain you any longer," said Edward, arising, when he heard this announcement; "our business is at an end, Captain Sayers. I feel delighted by your assurance, that I may count upon your good offices, and will now no longer detain you."

"I am very sorry that we should be interrupted by the intrusion of a stranger," said the worthy Commander, as he shook hands with

his guest, "but pray remember that I shall be delighted to see you, at all times. Perhaps you may sometimes like to look through my telescope."

The gentleman thanked him cordially, and left the room.

"Ha, Mr. Edward Mallory! are you here?" said a deep male voice, as he entered the passage, and looking up, he saw with astonishment, the tall, athletic figure of Captain Blake. "You and I, young gentleman, seem destined to meet; you must admit that!" cried the seaman, with a good-humoured laugh. "I hope when you understand me better, you will be less anxious to avoid me."

Edward made no reply, but civilly touched his hat, and passed on, whilst Blake entered the parlour of Captain Sayers.

"Do you recognise me?" demanded the rough sailor, of the old Commander, who stood up, on his approach, and surveyed him with a

puzzled look, through a very large pair of old-fashioned silver spectacles.

"Cannot say I do, sir," he said, at length, deliberately removing his glasses, and returning them to their case. "It does not appear to me, that I ever had the honour of seeing you before."

"I have not forgotten you, however," said his visitor. "You were the only officer on Dick Blake's court-martial, that had the honesty to take his part, and to assert in his evidence, that the treatment which he had received, was some excuse for his last act of insubordination. I was dismissed the service, nevertheless, Captain Sayers, yet probably, I was very little harder used, than you have been, who, for lack of interest, have seen men, young enough to be your sons, made admirals, whilst you never could arrive even at the rank of a post captain."

"Oh," said the old man, simply, "I don't

pretend to modern science. We live in an artificial state, and I was sent to sea at thirteen, when there were no schoolmasters on board."

"But it needed no schoolmaster, my old friend, to teach such as you and I to fight," replied Blake, "and though I was dismissed the British service, I could not give up a seafaring life."

"And you went into some foreign navy, I suppose?" inquired his host.

"No, not that," returned Blake. "It is true that America offers tempting pay, and many of England's bravest sailors man the American fleet; but I preferred independence. I became a trader on my own account."

"A privateer, perhaps?"

"Not exactly," answered the seaman. "But I had been dishonoured in my native land, by the arrogant injustice of my superiors; every honourable pursuit, had, in England, been closed against me, I was outlawed, as it were,

from the society of my own class, and I assumed the American flag, in the hope, that if a war broke out, I might, one day, have ample revenge. I emancipated myself from the laws of a country, which had failed to protect me against aristocratic injustice."

"Very imprudent, and very wrong," said Captain Sayers, shaking his head.

"You think so, no doubt," answered the seaman, "but I do not. A life of adventure was necessary to my existence; I traded in the eastern seas, and had many battles with the pirates of the Chinese Archipelago."

"I have heard your name," returned the old Commander, regarding his companion with as much astonishment and dismay as he would a tiger, had he found himself suddenly enclosed within its den.

"No doubt you have heard my name, connected with much abuse, which I do not deserve," said Blake. "I have only been a free-trader, in defiance of prohibitions, to countries,

where few have dared to venture, and now free-trade is the fashion, even in England."

"Ah, sir, we are in a very artificial state," sighed the Captain, and he shook his head mournfully, for he felt so completely puzzled, by the easy manners and uncommon style of his guest's conversation, that he muttered his favourite phrase, without, in truth, attaching mnch meaning to the words.

"We were in an artificial state," returned Blake, "but we are breaking through its trammels, much faster than many great folks, are aware of. The English people have only to be true to themselves, to hold fast together, and make a united use of the advantages they possess, and our artificial state, will soon be put an end to, altogether. We shall live to see the day, when many abuses will be removed, by the natural good sense of the thinkers and workers, who have hitherto been the despised tools of rank and money."

"Heaven defend me, from all revolutions,"

exclaimed the Captain, clasping his hands in utter consternation. "I have seen steam-boats taking place of men of war, and steam-carriages have annihilated our superb stage coaches, which were the admiration of London on a king's birthday; and it would kill me outright, if I were to witness such another revolution."

Blake looked at his simple minded host with considerable curiosity, and then shaking his head, as if he thoroughly understood his character, and felt that it was worse than useless to talk to him on such subjects, he suddenly changed the discourse, by asking him, if he was not very intimate with Mr. Thornton.

"Thornton! the Custom-House Officer, do you mean?" was the Captain's rejoinder, and he was more than ever astonished, that his second visitor that day should question him, as the first had done, concerning his old acquaintance.

"Yes, the same," said Blake. "His wife and mine, were distantly connected."

"Ah, indeed, I had forgotten that," returned Sayers. "Have you seen him since your return?"

"I have a great regard for him," said the seaman, without making a more direct reply, to this question, "and I want your assistance, in order, if possible to give him timely warning, of a very great danger, which others are preparing for him."

"My assistance!" exclaimed the old officer, whose faculties were now completely bewildered, by this second application for his services.

"Yes, I know you are a kind hearted, honest man, Captain Sayers," returned Blake, "and one upon whose activity and discretion, reliance can be placed, when the welfare of a friend is at stake. I rely therefore, on your assistance in this affair."

"The d—l you do!" exclaimed the Commander, wiping away the perspiration, which now stood like pearls upon his forehead; and so overcome was he by this extraordinary and repeated interruption of the usual monotony of his existence, as to feel a confused dread of the actual commencement of a revolution. "And pray, sir, may I ask, what task you expect me to perform?" he demanded, in a very anxious voice.

"It is by no means, a difficult one," replied Blake, laughing at the terror he had excited. "I shall feel obliged by your seeing Mr. Thornton, as soon as possible, aed delivering this letter into his own hands."

"Is that all!" cried the Captain, accepting without hesitation, the packet presented to him, by his visitor, and drawing a long breath, as if a mighty weight had been suddenly removed from his breast. "I am shortly going down to his house, to spend the evening, and

will give it to him without fail. Must I tell him, who sent it?"

"On no account," was his visitor's answer. "I wish that to remain a profound secret. But this I request of you, Captain Sayers! It is now six o'clock—should Thornton not come home, or you are prevented delivering that letter, by any other circumstance—you must let me know it, without fail, at nine o'clock. Not one moment later. I shall be waiting for you before the Red Lion, in the fish-market. Promise to meet me there, should the letter, at nine o'clock, be still in your possession."

"I will not fail," replied Captain Sayers, who was strongly impressed, by the decided, and imposfng tone and manner of his visitor. He no longer entertained a doubt, that he possessed some mysterious influence over the fortunes of his old friend, and though uncertain, whether it might be for good, or for evil, his weak mind yielded to the strong will of the

seaman, and he agreed to do all he required of him, without further questioning.

He even allowed Blake, before his departure, to shake him cordially by the hand, though he felt a sort of tingling in his arm as their fingers came in contact, and he sunk back in his wooden arm-chair, totally overcome by the unusual excitement of his feelings, as soon as his visitor had disappeared. He only recovered his ordinary vigour and activity, after his housekeeper had administered to him, the unfailing remedy of a glass of grog, very hot —and remarkably strong.

He then took courage, to examine the letter committed to his charge, and had he been possessed of the mesmeric power of reading through a sealed cover, he would certainly have been unable, to resist his curiosity to peruse its hidden contents. But he had no such gift, and vainly turned it from side to side; neither the seal, nor the address, conveyed to him the least information.

As his fears subsided, he felt considerably elevated in his own esteem, by the double commission he had received; and it was with no small sense of his own importance, that he buttoned up his coat, and set off to perform the tasks he had undertaken.

CHAPTER IV.

Mr. Thornton, when he left Edward Mallory in uncertainty as to his acceptance of his proposal to marry his daughter, had proceeded to his office as usual; but his heart was troubled, and his spirits were depressed, in a manner by no means common, after he had partaken of a social meal.

There were, in fact, circumstances connected with his daughter, and he had entered into certain engagements, with a person whom he could not venture to displease, which made him feel very doubtful, as to the possibility of his accepting Edward Mallory's offer to marry her. Moreover, he was that day perfectly sober, and accordingly, like all men, who have the habit

of indulging in intoxication, when free from this false excitement, he was fearfully depressed; and painfully sensible of the full extent of his debts and complicated embarrassments.

He went that afternoon through the duties of his profession, as if a case of lead was pressing every moment closer and closer round his heart; labour was irksome to him; his thoughts were yet more so. Impatiently weary of the present, the future was full of terrors, and conscience, like a mocking spirit, was ever repeating to him, that his misfortunes were the consequence of his own faults.

A more melancholy spectacle could not have been seen, than the poor Custom House Officer, as he closed his books and left his desk, that evening. His bloated face was pale and spiritless, his gait careless and sluggish, as if all moral and nervous strength had utterly forsaken him. He had neither hope, nor reliance on anything, for consolation, but his old fatal

resource—strong potations. He turned his steps therefore, to the Black Bull public house.

Such is the madness of the confirmed drinker, ever seeking support or oblivion from the insidious enemy—the merciless destroyer, which has already ruined his fortunes, benumbed his energies, and rendered his talents useless, and his name a reproach, leaving him no future, but a pauper's death. And yet Thornton knew all that could be urged against his evil practices; in earlier life, he had felt shame when he fell into them, and had frequently endeavoured to shake them off; but he was long past that now. This vice held him so firmly in its grasp, that he had lost the power of resistance, and no longer attempted it. He considered it folly to embitter the hours he could snatch for enjoyment, by any needless scruples.

Two strong glasses of brandy-and-water had put him into better spirits; and after holding forth very wisely, for above an hour, about

progress and science, and the advantages of knowledge, he arose to return home, in order to renew his potations with Captain Sayers, when a ragged boy came into the room, and slipped a note into his hand.

He opened it carelessly; but no sooner had he glanced over its contents, than his manner suddenly changed. He hastily thrust the paper into his pocket, and snatched up his hat without another moment's delay.

Even if the brandy he had swallowed had not revived his spirits, the contents of the epistle he had perused would have sufficed to rouse him to exertion. It was from Mr. Parkins, the solicitor; the man to whom he owed much, and whom he employed to negotiate with his other creditors, till the happy moment he had long vainly expected arrived, when, by the success of some speculation, he should be remunerated for all his previous losses, and enabled to release himself from all the difficulties of debt.

Mr. Parkins had long had his own private reasons for deluding Thornton with hopes of impossible profits, which encouraged his extravagance, and multiplied his embarrassments. But the lawyer, as if anxious that his intimacy with him should remain secret, had, at all times, held their consultations in remote and unfrequented places; and instead of receiving him at his office, like his ordinary clients, had even come to his house in the dead of the night, as on that occasion when Mary recognised him by his peculiar gait. Thornton knew perfectly well what were the causes of this mysterious conduct, and why Mr. Parkins, at all times, enjoined him to maintain a profound secresy as to their communications; and conscious that he was in the lawyer's power, he had been, for years, obliged to comply with his wishes.

As he approached the house-door, a large party of workmen mounted the steps in front of it, talking and laughing as they ascended,

and he drew back to let them pass. During this pause, he took his handkerchief from his pocket to wipe the perspiration from his brow, and, unconsciously, jerked the note he had just received, on to the ground. Soon afterwards, he walked on, without being aware of his loss.

But the folded white paper did not escape the observation of Frank Bernard, one of the party, who, though he rarely entered a public-house, had come there that evening with Nelly's turbulent brother—not to indulge in debauchery, but to be present at a conference of mechanics, and, if possible, to impose some restraint on the speeches of the most discontented of his fellow-workmen, concerning a dispute then pending between them and their masters.

Pressed back behind the crowd, Thornton had not observed him, and Frank had neither raised his hat, nor addressed him, for he had sufficient delicacy of mind to feel that the

Custom-House Officer would not wish to be recognised in such a place.

After entering the public-house, Frank first found time to examine the paper, which one of his companions told him had been dropped by Mr. Thornton; and when he perused its contents, he had no doubt that such was, in fact, the case.

It had no address, but contained these words—

"Dear T.

"As soon as you leave your office, come without delay, and meet me at Carnaby's Inn, in the fisher's cove. Take the least frequented path, as it is still daylight."

The surprise of Frank, as he read these lines, was very great; for Carnaby's Inn was known, to all his class, to be a low public-house of very indifferent character, on a

solitary part of the coast, which was never resorted to by any but smugglers and vagrants; and he was not only astonished, but dismayed, to find that Nelly's old master had any associate who could appoint such a suspicious place for meeting him.

His mind was too much engrossed by the discovery he had made, for him to pay much attention, that afternoon, to the debates of his companions. He was perfectly aware of Mr. Thornton's difficulties, and his attachment to his sweet daughter, whom he had known from a child, made him regard, with most intense interest, the contents of the paper, which seemed to intimate the danger of his becoming entangled with lawless and desperate associates, by whom his weakness of character and his vices might be recklessly turned to account.

For some time, the worthy fellow was at a loss to decide what steps he ought to take, in consequence of his discovery. At length, it suddenly occurred to him, that Mr. Edward

Mallory, in the absence of Mr. Gerard, was the proper person to consult. He had left him at Mr. Thornton's house not a quarter of an hour before, and Nelly had informed him that he was Miss Mary's accepted lover; so that, in every respect, he felt convinced, that he was the safest person to whom a secret, so deeply concerning Miss Thornton's happiness, could be entrusted.

He saw no possibility of being able to prevent Mr. Thornton's keeping the appointment at Carnaby's Inn, that evening, but still he trusted that something might be done to hinder any evil consequences resulting from it, if the friends of the Custom-house Officer were made acquainted with the danger. He therefore turned his steps at once towards that gentleman's house, with the hope of finding Mr. Mallory still there.

But Mallory had not remained more than a few minutes with Mary; and as soon as he had informed her of the result of his visit to

Captain Sayers, he had left her, in order that this worthy gentleman might be at perfect liberty, during the evening, to remonstrate as he had promised, with his erring friend, and to urge him to reform.

The old Commander did not fail to arrive soon after Edward's departure, for he was impatient to deliver the letter from Blake, and he was greatly disappointed, when he found Mary, presiding, alone, over her tea-table.

The girl, supposing that her father had been detained beyond the usual hour for his return, by the duties of his office, which was not uncommonly the case, made tea without waiting for him, and insisted on the old Commander's remaining to partake of it. But such was his impatience to get over the unpleasant tasks which had been imposed on him, that the muffins and buttered toast, in which he usually delighted, remained almost untouched.

Hour after hour glided on without Mr. Thornton making his appearance, and Mary, at

length, became seriously uneasy at his absence being protracted so far beyond the ordinary time of his return.

Captain Sayers felt exceedingly uncomfortable, whenever he thought of Blake, but he had not courage to utter a syllable concerning him. It was very remarkable he thought, that this man should have foreseen the probability of his not being able to deliver his letter that evening, to Thornton, and he resolved, at all hazards, to meet him as he had promised, at nine o'clock, and to inform him of the extraordinary absence of the Custom-House Officer.

After he left Miss Thornton, he found Edward Mallory waiting for him in the street, anxious to learn what impression his advice had made on Thornton. When he heard of his absence, he regretted it as causing a delay in the accomplishment of Mary's wishes, but he was not sufficiently acquainted with her father's ordinary habits, to feel alarmed by it, and was, therefore, a good deal surprised by the great

uneasiness which Captain Sayers expressed, whilst his evident desire to escape from him, astonished him no less.

"I will go down to some of his places of call in the town, and enquire after him," said the old man, "and I should advise you to keep Miss Thornton company till her father's return. He cannot surely be later than ten o'clock, though he has got into one of his old scrapes, I fear."

Then shaking his head most knowingly, the Captain walked away, leaving Mallory fully impressed with the idea that Thornton was detained by some of his boon companions.

Sayers found Blake pacing impatiently up and down the pavement, at the place of appointment, where scarcely any one passed at that hour. The moon was already so far past the full, that the lamps were lighted for the first time, but the seaman kept as far away as possible, from their scanty rays.

This the Captain by no means liked in such

company, and as soon as he had recounted the result of his commission, and returned Blake's letter, he showed evident symptoms of intending to escape. But his companion held him fast by the button, till he answered all his questions concerning Thornton. His answers were not very clear, and the result was that Blake doubted the truth of his narrative, and suspected that he had invented the story of Thornton's absence, to conceal his own want of courage to deliver the letter.

Were his suspicions just, the sailor felt that so pressing was the urgency of the case, that setting aside all his wishes to remain concealed, he must carry his epistle himself, to the house of the Custom House Officer, and should he find that Thornton was in truth absent from his home, take other prompt measures for the accomplishment of the objeet he had in view.

His resolution once formed, he acted rapidly and decidedly. He took the letter from Captain Sayers, and to the old man's great re-

lief, he hastily wished him good night, and hurried up the market-place, without saying where he was going.

When Blake rang at the door of Thornton's house, Nelly Watson's replies to his inquiries for her master first convinced him of the truth of Captain Sayers's narrative.

"I am very anxious to see Mr. Thornton, on most important business, to-night," he said to the servant. "Have you any idea where your master is likely to be found?"

"None, in the least, sir," answered the girl.

"Is he frequently out so late?"

"Oh, no, sir," she replied, "and besides he expected company, and he said particularly, before he went out, that he should be back at six o'clock."

"Can I speak with Miss Thornton?" inquired Blake.

"Is that my father?" cried the girl, now looking anxiously from the parlour.

"No, miss," said Nelly, "it is a gentleman who wants master, and would like to speak to you."

"Show him in, Nelly," was Mary's reply; for from the spot where she stood, she could not distinguish the figure of Blake.

The seaman did not hesitate an instant, but advanced at once into the parlour. He was past the meridian of life, but as the light of the candles fell full upon him, he was still a striking and remarkable looking man. Mary knew too little of the world to observe that he wanted the studied tranquillity, considered necessary in refined society, to constitute a gentleman, yet before he had uttered a word, she shrunk with natural timidity from the reckless boldness of his carriage.

Edward Mallory, who stood near the window, started, when he looked up, and met the keen and searching glance of Blake, fixed inquiringly upon him. The seaman laughed.

"So you are here before me, Mr. Edward,"

he said. "I am very glad of it, for we must learn to understand each other better. Your father has prejudiced you against me; and did you resemble him, by Heaven, I would not stand five minutes in the same room with you. But for to-night, at least, you must forget your prejudices; and if Mr. Thornton is really missing, as I am told he is, you must lend me all the assistance in your power to discover him."

"May I inquire what interest you have in Mr. Thornton's movements, which makes you thus anxious to discover him?" demanded Mallory, with a cold severity of manner, which some might have resented, but which Blake did not chose to remark.

"We are connected by marriage, if not relatives," was his reply; "he was my friend in youth, and I would fain save him, were it possible, from the threatening consequences of his own follies. If I do not find him, to-night, it may be too late to rescue him from the snares

which are spread for him, by very subtle men, who care not for his ruin, so long as they can make use of him, to serve their own interests."

"Oh, sir, who are you, who seem so well acquainted with my father's position?" demanded Mary, eagerly; and so great was her agitation, that though she stood close to Edward Mallory, she trembled from head to foot.

"My name is Blake, my young lady," was the seaman's answer. "Some call me Captain Blake; but I have no right to the title. My wife was your mother's cousin, and the sister of Sir Thomas Mallory. She was a pretty crea ure, not unlike yourself; but I trust, for Mr. Edward Mallory's future happiness, if he is to be your husband, that you are somewhat wiser, and better tempered, than his aunt. Such simple, pretty dolls delight our eyes; but we soon find, to our dismay, they make but sorry wives. But I did not come here to

talk either of myself, or your relatives; and if you can give me no tidings of your father, I must go, at once, elsewhere."

"Oh, Miss Thornton, here is one, at last, who can tell us something about master!" exclaimed Nelly, who, at this moment, forgetting all the restraints of propriety, burst into the room.

To the surprise of all present, she was followed by Frank Bernard.

"Has any accident befallen my father?" demanded Mary, springing eagerly towards him.

"None, that I know of, Miss," said the workman. "Make your mind quite easy on that head. But I have found out, by accident, that he is gone to a very queer place; and, no doubt, in very queer company; and I thought it was my duty to let you and Mr. Edward know it as soon as possible."

"Ah, this is just what I dreaded!" exclaimed Blake.

"May I speak whilst that gentleman is here?" demanded Bernard, glancing with an eye of suspicion at the seaman, whose appearance excited his mistrust.

"I have a right to know everything," said Blake, in a most decided tone, before Edward or Mary could answer Frank's question. "I am a connexion of Mr. Thornton's family, and his friend."

"It is perfectly true," said Mallory, in answer to a glance from the shrewd workman.

"Well then, sir, read that, if you please," rejoined Bernard, putting the paper he had found into Blake's hands. I believe that this letter fell this evening from Mr. Thornton's pocket, as he was leaving the Black Bull. As you are a friend of his, perhaps you may know the hand-writing."

The seaman glanced rapidly and eagerly over the contents of the note, and then gave it to Edward.

"Do *you* know the writing, Mr. Mallory?"

he inquired, whilst a smile of very strange expression, played over his dry, brown lips.

"It is evidently a disguised hand," was the young man's reply; but, though I cannot divine who is the writer of the scrawl, I am perfectly aware of the infamous character of the place of appointment."

"For mercy's sake, what does all this mean?" cried Mary, who had been eagerly and anxiously listening to all that passed. "Do tell me, at once, what has happened to detain my father?"

"All that can be gathered from this note, my dear Miss Thornton," returned Edward, "is, that Mr. Thornton, after he left his office, was summoned to meet a person of his acquaintance, at a small and secluded public-house, about a mile along the sea-shore. It appears very unlikely, that any bodily harm was intended to him, and it is most probable that he will return here perfectly safe and well, in a very short time."

"Then why are you all so full of consternation?" persisted the girl. "I feel certain there is something wrong, which you are afraid to tell me."

"I am too well assured of your strength of mind, and good sense, Miss Thornton," returned Edward, "to make any needless mysteries. The place to which your father is requested to come, is a house of such notorious bad repute, that I am grieved to discover, that he has been induced, under any pretence, to hold a nocturnal meeting there."

"Oh, I dread to think what misfortunes his imprudence may lead him into, at last," exclaimed the girl, clasping her hands with an outburst of natural feeling, which made the rough seaman regard her with more interest than he had previously done.

"I'll tell you what," he said, abruptly, "there is less disgrace, at present, and more danger, for the future, in this matter, than any of you are aware. Though you, Mr. Ed-

ward, do not know who wrote that letter, I do; it comes from no low-lived scoundrel, as you seem to suppose, but from a fellow, whom many people call a gentleman. Whether he deserves the title, more than I do, is another question. He intends to do no personal harm to Mr. Thornton; only to make him the tool of one of his own dark schemes, of money making. For his own profit, he will tempt him to become a swindler, and scoundrel, and then leave him without assistance to meet the consequences of the crimes he persuaded him to commit."

"You seem to have an extraordinary knowledge of Mr. Thornton's affairs," said Mallory.

"Yes, sir," was the reply; "and of some other people's affairs, likewise: perhaps, you will place more confidence in what I say, when I tell you, the name of the man who wrote that note. You are a gentleman Mr. Mallory, and can keep a secret! You must know the whole circumstances of this strange story, if we

are to do anything effectual together, to rescue Thornton from the snares in which he is entangled."

Blake kept his large, keen, piercing eyes fixed on Edward's countenance, as he uttered these words, and then, as if satisfied with its expression, he bent forward, and whispered a name in his ear, which was inaudible to every one else in the room.

Mallory started when he heard it, and cast a quick and searching glance at the speaker.

"Yes, Mr. Edward," said Blake, with infinite composure, "I see you understand me. I have much more to tell you, which cannot here be spoken; but if you have sufficient confidence in me to accompany me in search of Mr. Thornton, I will tell you many secrets under the broad canopy of night, where there are no ears but yours to listen. You have mistrusted me long, I know. I shall be glad to prove to you, that it has been without a cause."

Mary looked timidly and anxiously at her lover; every moment increased her terror of her extraordinary visitor; but from Edward's countenance, on the contrary, all traces of distrust disappeared as he listened to this appeal, and with the natural frankness of his character, he held out his hand to Blake, with a cordial smile.

"You shall never repent this," said the seaman, in a voice of great agitation, as he grasped the young man's hand.

Every one in the little parlour felt, during the profound silence which ensued, that a solemn compact had been made, and that a bond of sympathy had been felt and acknowledged between these two men, who, although they had sailed across the Atlantic together, and were nearly allied by marriage, had been hitherto divided by a barrier of prejudice and mistrust, which others had sedulously laboured to create.

Edward was the first of the party who spoke.

"Miss Thornton," he said, "it grieves me to leave you still in suspense, and without your father's protection at this late hour; but I am sure, you do not wish me to delay, when I go in quest of him."

"Oh, no," exclaimed Mary, eagerly, "I am not so selfish. I only regret that I cannot express to you all the gratitude I feel for the warm interest you take in my poor father's affairs."

"For your sake, dearest Mary, I would gladly lay down my life," he murmured, so as to be audible to her alone, whom he addressed, and then added aloud, that it would be as well if Frank Bernard could remain in the house until Mr. Thornton's return, or until satisfactory tidings were received of him.

To this, the workman readily agreed; and then, without further delay, Edward Mallory and Blake left the house together.

CHAPTER V.

THORNTON was in unusually good spirits when he left the Black Bull. The brandy-and-water had put him in that pleasing state of gentle excitement, which the unfortunate victims of such indulgences call comfortable; and far from anticipating any unpleasant results from the meeting to which he had been summoned, he indulged in the most exhilarating hopes of approaching good fortune.

The evening was rapidly closing in, and heavy clouds rolling up from the dark and swelling sea, over which the wind swept in fitful gusts, portended a night of storm. Yet the Custom-House Officer, regardless of weather, hurried through the streets, and soon leaving

the town behind him, pursued his way along the brink of the high cliffs overhanging the sea, at the north end of the harbour.

The rushing sound of the waves, as they rolled slowly to the shore, and burst, in long succession, against the grinding pebbles, mingled solemnly with the moaning of the wind; and before Thornton had trodden half the way to his place of destination, so deep a gloom had gathered over earth, and sky, and ocean, that nothing but the white crests of the rushing billows could be distinguished along the solitary shore.

At length, after walking about two miles, he reached the brink of a narrow ravine, through which a little rivulet made its way to the sea, between rugged and broken banks, scantily clothed with furze and a few scattered stunted trees. A light was glimmering from a window at the bottom of the gloomy dell. Thornton knew that it burnt in the house called Carnaby's Inn, whither his steps were directed;

but the outline of which was now scarcely discernible in the darkness. With extreme difficulty, he descended the steep path leading to it.

There certainly appeared very little danger of his visit being observed by any one, in the deep obscurity of that gloomy evening; and it now, for the first time, occurred to his mind, that it was extraordinary that such a place of meeting had been appointed, if the business to be discussed related only to his own speculations. He knew the house, to which he was going, was in bad repute, and, under other circumstances, he would probably have felt some reluctance to enter it alone, at such an hour; but the character of the man whom he expected to meet, sufficed to dispel all apprehensions. He felt that he should very shortly be in good company, and had, therefore, nothing to dread.

At the foot of the path down the bank, was a back door, opening from a cabbage-garden,

under the shelving, thatched roof of the roughly built cottage ; and after listening here for a minute or two, to ascertain that all was quiet within, he knocked softly for admission.

The door was almost immediately opened by the mistress of the house—an old woman, in a coarse blue bed-gown, with a red handkerchief tied over her head. But though wrinkled with age, grey-haired, and toothless, her keen glance proved that her intellect was unimpared.

"Are you Mr. Thornton?" she said, in a sharp voice, and she held up the candle she carried, so as to have a clear view of the face of the new comer.

"Yes, I am Mr. Thornton," replied the Custom-House Officer. "Has any one enquired for me here this evening?"

"There is one in the parlour waiting for you," answered the crone. "It is a queer place for one of your calling to come to ; but I suppose you won't peach, or you would not

have been brought here. But step in, and let me fasten the door. We shall have rough weather before long."

Thornton obeyed in silence. The old woman silently gave him the candle to hold whilst she drew the bolts. She then preceded him into a low, paved kitchen, where a fire was burning; but not a living creature was to be seen, except a large newfoundland dog, which lay on the earth, and opened its eyes on hearing the step of a stranger; but closed them again with a low growl, when the old woman held up her hand, and told him to be quiet.

She then opened a door, and requested her companion to walk into an inner room, a small, low, damp place, with a sanded floor, which she called a parlour. The walls were whitewashed, two wretched coloured prints in black frames, representing courtship and matrimony, hung above the chimney-piece, which narrow ledge was adorned with a painted tin tea-caddy, and two brass candlesticks. A tallow candle, with

a very long wick, burnt on a little round table, in the middle of the floor, and three deal chairs completed the furniture of the apartment. It smelt very strongly of rum and tobacco.

A man stood with his back to the grate, forgetting, probably, that it contained no fire, and when he hastily turned, on Thornton's entrance, the Custom-House Officer recognised, with great satisfaction, the friend he came there to meet.

He wore a wig of very different colour from his own hair, and a very shabby suit of black, which gave him an appearance very far from that of a gentleman; for his figure was mean and sneaking, and when divested of the aid of dress, had nothing to inspire respect. But the keen black eyes, projecting forehead, and hanging eye-brows, were not to be mistaken by one who had seen Mr. Parkins as often as Thornton had, and he recognised the attorney at one glance, in spite of his disguise. But, in

obedience to previous instructions, he addressed him as Mr. Bates.

The old woman cast a quick glance from one to the other, and having placed a bottle of brandy, a jug of hot water, with sugar and glasses, upon the table, she went away, and left them together. Quickly and softly she then opened the front door, and gave admission to a tall, thin man, whose limbs hung very loosely together, and whose high nose was exceedingly red. It was the pettifogging attorney Atkins, the low agent, of many of Mr. Parkins's intrigues, but who, not trusted on the present occasion, had tracked the lawyer's steps, and being an old frequenter of the house, had, by slipping a shilling into the hand of the mistress, induced her to give him admission to a certain dark store closet, divided from the parlour, only by a boarded partition, and from whence he could securely hear every word that was uttered therein. The old woman herself, having thus disposed of her guests, sat down

and smoked by the kitchen fire. She guessed shrewdly enough, that they were after no good, but she did not concern herself at all about that. Though she had once been capable of strong feelings and affections, she had long ceased to regard any breach of the law relating to smuggling, a crime; and since her husband had been shot in a skirmish with the coast guard, and one of her sons had died in prison, where he had been sent, after being convicted of contraband trading, she had a savage pleasure in aiding and abetting all those who defied the Custom-House.

When Parkins gave her a guinea, to keep the house clear of her family that night, for his use, she understood at once that his business was in some way nefarious; but she did not hesitate, on that account, to comply with his wishes. But when she learnt from Atkins, that her guest was Parkins the Attorney, who had been the principal agent in the trial and conviction of her son, the desire of revenge made

her, at once, eagerly ready to assist him to become a listener to this man's secret conversation, which her own deafness, and the fear of detection prevented her doing.

Parkins, in the meanwhile, without the slightest suspicion of being watched, seated himself at the table, and invited Thornton to partake of the good cheer he had provided for him. To this the Custom-House Officer most readily agreed, and Parkins having filled his glass, then helped himself more sparingly. He then began the conversation, by thanking Thornton for his prompt compliance with his request, for him to come there that evening.

"To tell you the truth," was the reply, "you have very little to be grateful for; my circumstances are now in such a desperate state, that I have no scruple in saying, that my first care is my own interest. You mentioned, the last time I saw you, that you were likely, before long, to have some information to give me, about a payment by the gold mine company,

you induced me to take shares in, or I hardly think I should have been tempted to come far from home, at such a time of night."

"I fear you must have mistaken the purport of my note," returned the lawyer. "I did not make any mention of the gold mines; for, in fact, the last accounts are far from favourable, and the shareholders are called on to pay a second deposit. I am sorry to tell you, that if the sum of a hundred pounds is not placed in my hands by to-morrow at noon, your shares will be forfeited, and your credit materially injured."

Mr. Thornton looked perfectly agast, as he listened to this appalling statement; appalling in truth to him, who, without a pound that he could command in the world, had deceived himself, till that moment, with the hope that he was to hear that evening of some marvellous profits from his last, and most desperate speculation, which he fondly trusted would at once relieve him from all his embarrassments. He

had embarked the small residue of his property, in this mine, without even being quite certain of its locality, or having more than Mr. Parkins's assurance, of the existence of the Directors, to whose promises, and descriptions of an Eldorado, he blindly trusted.

It was some minutes before he could reply, and when he did so, it was in a voice so tremulous from intense suffering, that had Parkins been a man capable of compassion, he must have hesitated, in the prosecution of the infamous project he had in view. But he, on the contrary, exulted in the weakness of his victim, and his thin lips were parted with a smile as Thornton explained to him, that his debts were already so considerable, that there was not the slightest chance of his being able to procure a hundred pounds, even, if he had a month's notice; but that, on the morrow, it was utterly impossible."

"Have you no plate, my dear fellow?" demanded the unfeeling attorney.

"That is gone long ago," returned Thornton, with a deep sigh.

"Books?"

"Gone also."

"Furniture?"

"I was threatened with an execution in the house to-day, and to sell the last furniture I have, would produce little cash, were it even possible to do so," answered the Custom-House Officer.

"And you actually have no funds?"

"None, whatever."

"But surely you could raise something on your next half year's salary?" persisted the lawyer, without mercy for his victim.

"By God, sir—if you force me to reveal the whole extent of my misery," cried the wretched man, starting up from his chair, and then sinking down again in desperation, "I must tell you, that I have raised all I could on my salary, a week ago, and it is almost gone already."

"And when it is gone, sir?" demanded Parkins, with unrelenting barbarity.

"When it is gone, sir!" echoed Thornton, at length aroused to indignation, by the insolence of such a demand; "when that is gone, I shall quickly rest, where the rich man's insults can no longer gall the hearts of the poor. Though I have not the courage to support beggary, I shall not lack the courage to die."

"Oh, no, my good friend," said Parkins, laughing outright, "I trust there is no necessity for your making such a tragical termination to our little speculations. You have enjoyed life as much as any man I know, and I hope there will be no occasion for you to leave it in a pet, because a little matter of business has not answered to your wishes."

"I see no prospect of any other relief from my difficulties," answered Thornton, desperately, "and by heaven, sir, it is you who have been the author of my ruin."

"This is somewhat unjust, surely, to the

man who has done everything in his power to maintain your credit," said the lawyer, very calmly.

"Credit! Yes, credit—it is credit which is making our whole commerce a system of rotten speculation," cried Thornton. "It is credit which drew me on to bankruptcy, and has since induced me to neglect every prudent means of livelihood. The Joint-Stock Banks, by which you gentlemen, who sport with other people's money, encourage all desperate speculators who give them large interest, have ruined, by the reckless competition they encourage, a host of men who seek to trade on their own small capital. I, for one, if I had not found easy credit, could never have run the dangerous risks I did, and thus become a bankrupt."

"You thanked me for the accommodation at the time," said the attorney, as placidly as before. "You have no right to reproach others for the misfortunes which were the natural re-

sult of your own distempered and incautious thirst for gain. You chose to play high stakes, and lost. There is no more to be said on the subject; passion only makes matters worse, but if you can be calm and reasonable, it is possible that your affairs may not be so desperate, but that some remedy may yet be found."

"It is too late—too late," muttered Thornton. "There is neither hope nor remedy for me. I have exhausted the sympathy of my friends, and there is not one upon earth, to whom I can turn for assistance."

"As you are apt to be too sanguine in prosperity, my good Mr. Thornton, so you are too despairing in adversity," answered Parkins. "Surely you cannot suppose, that I came here to-night, for the sole purpose of asking you for a hundred pounds. That scarcely required so much caution and secresy."

"I have been thinking so for some time,"

was the cautious reply. "May I inquire for what you have met me here, then?"

"If you are sufficiently calm to listen to reason," said the lawyer, "I will explain my real object, in requesting a meeting with you, without further delay."

Here Atkins, fearful of losing a word, made a slight movement, so as to bring his ear nearer to a crevice in the wall, and the rustling of the straw, amidst which he lay, made Parkins look round with suspicion; but after listening for a minute or two, and all remaining silent and still, he was convinced that there was no cause for apprehending an eaves-dropper.

"It was only a cat," said Thornton, who had swallowed half a glass of brandy-and-water in the interval of silence occasioned by this interruption.

Parkins made no reply, but softly arose and opening the door, looked out into the kitchen. The old woman was sitting near the fire, ap-

parently asleep, and no sound broke the dreary stillness of the place, save the roaring and rushing of the stormy elements without, and the loud monotonous ticking of a large clock, which seemed to make a ceaseless complaint of its captivity, in an upright oaken case. He then returned to the table, snuffed the candle very deliberately, and sat down directly in front of Thornton.

"My good friend," he said with a smile of unwonted amiability, "you have judged your friends too harshly, when you said their sympathy was exhausted. I am as ready and anxious to assist you as I have ever been. Name whatever sum you think necessary to extricate you from your present embarrassments, and in the course of to-morrow, it shall be placed at your disposal."

"Mr. Parkins, dare I trust these professions!" exclaimed his companion, whose faculties were by no means in the clearest order.

"I am perfectly serious in what I offer," returned the lawyer. "Consider calmly, and tell me the amount of your most pressing debts and liabilities."

Though Thornton was naturally careless and reckless about money, and the pressure of accumulated misfortunes and disappointments had lately made him desperate, he had yet the remains of honourable feelings, and he recoiled with shame and wounded pride from being thus catechised. His face became as red as crimson, and he passed his hand several times across his brow, without answering. He who had thoughtlessly incurred debts to the amount of many thousands, in the course of his life, shrank from confessing that he was almost driven to suicide, for the paltry amount of his present liabilities.

"No reservation—no reservation, I beg, Mr. Thornton," said his inexorable companion. "I must know all, if I am to assist you! What sum do you require?"

"Three hundred and fifty pounds," was the ruined man's reply.

"Ah, bah! that is a mere bagatelle! I expected you were going to say a thousand, at least," cried Parkins, greatly relieved by this disclosure.

"It is some time since I had anything to do with thousands," answered Thornton, bitterly. "But, I suppose you will not even advance the sum I name, without security, and I tell you frankly, I have none to give you."

"The Joint Stock Bank shall lend it you without security—I shall recommend you, and ask for no security," returned the lawyer.

His companion looked at him with amazement as he uttered these words; for no power on earth could have convinced him that Mr. Parkins was a man capable either of a benevolent or a generous action. He felt, therefore, at once, that some secret self-interest must be the motive of such an offer.

"But, Mr. Thornton," continued Parkins,

fixing his keen eyes on his victim, "there are certain services which you can render me in return."

"Services!" was the Custom-House Officer's wondering exclamation. "I did not believe it remained in my power to serve any man living."

"Nay," returned the lawyer, "I have not forgotten that you did me a great service in former days, and though you were paid handsomely for it, at the time, I do not consider that my obligation to you is obliterated. It was encreased when you complied with my wish, and rejected the addresses of Mr. Oswald Mallory to your daughter; and I believe you have had reason to know that I was not ungrateful. I cannot forget, though you may be inclined to do so, that since I got you into the Custom House, I have been indebted to you for other little friendly offices."

"Oh, things not worth mentioning, which a man in your position has a right to expect

from an old acquaintance," answered Thornton, and his hand shook as he rested it on the table, whilst the expression of his eyes became agitated and uneasy.

"You are very good to say so," returned the lawyer, with a quiet sneer, "and all this gives me the hope that, in return for any accommodation I may have the pleasure of affording, or procuring for you, I may venture to expect a service, which, to me, will be of equal importance."

"Oh, anything in my power," cried Thornton, eagerly, for he was getting impatient to know in what all this preamble was to terminate. "Only name your terms, Mr. Parkins; I am sure I shall be delighted to gratify your wishes, in every way in my power."

"The affair is not at all difficult," was the reply, "only I had some misgivings, that you are apt to be scrupulous in matters of business

—in fact, that you consider the revenue under your own especial protection."

Thornton no sooner heard these words, than he understood all that was required of him. He felt as if his heart was suddenly compressed, and the perspiration burst out at every pore of his forehead.

"Yes," he said, tremulously, "I once had a conscience."

"Once!" echoed his tempter, and he laughed that little, low, chuckling laugh, which always betrayed his sense of triumph. "Is it a long while ago, Mr. Thornton?"

"By heaven, sir, you will goad me to madness!" cried the unfortunate man, starting from his chair, and rapidly pacing the little room, his arms tossed wildly to and fro, and his countenance fearfully convulsed. "Such men as you, Mr. Parkins, who never had a conscience—who, in the fresh, pure vigour of youth, never heard, with exultation, the ap-

proving whispers of this Heaven-sent instructor, cannot understand that weak man's agony, who wilfully has closed his ears to its warnings, whilst, one by one, his virtues fell away, till ruined and undone, he hears, at length, the voice of its reproaches, adding new pangs to all his self-wrought misery. Such, sir, am I! Conscience, the messenger between men and heaven, is now my curse."

"Then it will, perhaps, be better to put conscience altogether out of the question." said the attorney, without betraying the least emotion. He knew the man he had to deal with, and that, though he might struggle for a while in his toils, he could not escape.

Like a cunning fisherman, therefore, he thought it best to give him sufficient line, that he might exhaust his energies, and yield, at last, more easily. He remained silent for some minutes, patiently waiting the result of Thornton's reflections, for he felt sure, that when his excitement had subsided, the remembrance of

his debts and difficulties would return, and with that, a full appreciation of the value of his offers of assistance. He watched him calmly, therefore, till his anticipations were fulfilled.

Thornton's countenance betrayed the rapid change of emotions, which contended for the mastery in his breast, till, at length, worn out and despairing, he resumed his seat. He took up the glass on the table, which Parkins had cunningly filled, and emptied it at a draught; then striking his fist violently on his knees, as if to strengthen his sudden resolution, he said, in a hoarse, low voice—

"Now, Mr. Parkins, in what way can I serve you?"

"Before I reveal my secret," returned the wily lawyer, "you must first give me your solemn promise, that you will, without hesitation, perform all I shall require of you."

"I promise it, on condition that my debts are paid to-morrow," answered Thornton.

"Of course, it will be your interest as well as mine, to maintain the most profound secresy as to this transaction," returned Parkins.

"It may be so," was the reply; "but you have not yet told me how far I am concerned in it."

"The fact is," said the lawyer, "you must serve me, merely by leaving certain things undone. I expect a large American vessel, laden ostensibly with cotton, to arrive in this port, in the course of a week or ten days. She is somewhat curiously constructed, and I shall rely on you to prevent her being too narrowly searched. You understand me. I leave you at full liberty to bribe wherever you think it necessary; and take care that the captain's papers are not objected to."

"Then you mean to imply," returned the Custom-House Officer, "that there are other commodities on board this vessel, besides cotton; there are hollow crevices perhaps, about her, well filled."

"Exactly so," said Parkins, who unwillingly made the admission, "that is to say I suppose so, for I have no precise knowledge of the plan that has been adopted."

"Cigars, perhaps—tobacco, that is the fashionable article to smuggle now-a-days," rejoined Thornton.

"Something of the sort," said the lawyer. "I don't exactly know the nature of the cargo, for it is not my own venture, but there is a considerable sum of money embarked in it, and in this I have an interest. I don't precisely understand, not being a trader myself, how these affairs are managed, but I leave all to your discretion. Nothing illicit must be discovered; that is what I require."

"Oh, I perfectly comprehend you," answered Thornton, without looking up, "I am to betray the confidence of the government, which employs me; I am to be a scoundrel, in short, for another man's profit."

"For your own, you mean," returned Par-

kins, softly; "you seem to forget the money you have bargained to receive."

"True—true," he murmured." I wish I could as easily forget my own dishonour."

"Well, really, Mr. Thornton, "said the lawyer, very blandly, "considering the transactions in which you have borne a part, and the position in which you now stand, I should think that was of very little consequence."

The miserable functionary hung his head; he had no reply to make; but could the feelings of shame, regret and despair, which then agitated his breast, have found fitting expression, they would have sufficed to deter from the wild career of speculation, many like him, who, ambitious and impatient to enjoy the appearance and the advantages of wealth, plunge with borrowed capital into commerce, without either understanding or diligently attending to the business in which they have risked their own credit, and other people's money.

The attempt of the poor to vie with the rich, and imitate the splendour and extravagance of the wealthy, without the real means of doing so, is one of the worst evils of luxury in a mercantile country, and one to which vain, imprudent, plausible men, like Thornton, are daily falling victims, and dragging down with them, all who have trusted in their solvency.

"Did you say you expected the vessel to arrive next week?" asked the wretched man, at length breaking silence.

"Yes, the Nancy, of New York! she belongs to Captain Blake," was the reply.

"Has he an interest in the freight?"

"None whatever."

"But he probably knows the nature of the cargo?" inquired Thornton.

"I believe so," answered Parkins, "but he declined risking his ship by running into some snug cove along the shore, on a dark night. In fact he is getting an old man, and is scrupulous about smuggling. I could neither

persuade him to take the command of the vessel, nor to lend any assistance whatever, so you see we must arrange to do the thing quietly, and you being the most responsible person in these matters, there can be no difficulty in it. When the vessel has been visited and efficiently searched, the captain can easily manage to get all suspicious goods on shore; the way through the Custom-House yard will be least liable to suspicion. But we can arrange that when the time comes."

"Well, Mr. Parkins," said Thornton, arising to depart, "I must candidly tell you I don't like this business, at all; but if you get me into trouble, you must help me out of it again, for I shall not be to blame for it. My necessities compel me to betray my trust, and, in truth, life has latterly been such a burthen to me, that I care very little what I do. So good night to you. If we mean to return to town to-night, we had better set off, for it is

awfully dark, and if I am not mistaken, it begins to rain sharply."

"Thank you," replied Parkins. "I prefer going alone. We must not run the risk of being seen together. I shall go up the ravine, to the carriage road, whilst you had better return by the cliffs."

"It is all the same to me," returned Thornton; "but I will start directly, for it is getting late, and poor little Mary will be alarmed at my being abroad, on such a tempestuous night."

Parkins smiled grimly, and held out his hand, which it was impossible for Thornton to refuse taking; but he shuddered at the touch of those bony fingers.

The lawyer then paid the reckoning, and this done they parted at the back door, totally unconscious that the whole of the preceding interview had been overheard, by a man who would not fail to turn such a secret to his own advantage.

Though the night was dark and tempestuous, Thornton rejoiced to get rid of his companion, and preferred exploring his difficult way alone, to having the lawyer's company. Though his own thoughts were very painful, they were less odious to him than such society.

Dense masses of black clouds were rolling low and rapidly before the howling wind, and showers fell heavily from time to time, but Thornton took little heed of the weather; he was thinking of the crime he had agreed to perpetrate—of the danger attending, and the hopeless ruin which must follow its detection; and more than once, as he passed near the edge of the cliff, and listened to the sea chafing at its base, he felt tempted to jump from the precipice into the brawling ocean beneath, and thus terminate his miserable existence, before the disgrace of criminality could be attached to his name.

But the instinctive love of life, which makes the beggar die of starvation in his secluded

garret, rather than shorten, by his own hand, his heavy chain of suffering, was strong within him. Hope revived as he proceeded; conscience began to make terms with necessity, and before he had trodden half the way to his home, he had persuaded himself that the matter was not so bad, after all, as it had at first appeared to him.

So it is, that self interest varnishes over-crime, and the mind which has once stooped to tamper with evil, by a rapid decline, soon ceases to recoil from its enormity.

CHAPTER VI.

"So, Mr. Mallory," said Blake to his young companion, after they had proceeded a few paces from the house of Mr. Thornton, in silence, "you have been long taught to consider me a very great ruffian or something worse. Though we sailed across the Atlantic together, I confess I did not then think it worth the trouble to seek the approbation of a boy; and that boy your father's son; but circumstances have altered our position, and you must learn to know me, as I am. I have heard that you are worthy of respect, that you have a strong, earnest will; like myself, are impatient of idleness and inaction, and discard the principles of

your insolent family. We must understand each other."

"I confess I have been told much to your disadvantage," was Edward's reply.

"I do not doubt it!" rejoined Blake. "Those who set the prejudices of the social circle to which they belong at defiance, are sure to provoke its enmity. I may have erred in doing so, I admit, but by heaven I do not repent it. Had I my course to run again, no power on earth should induce me to endure the dull servility of money making, and to breathe the smoky air of crowded cities, in some office, where all the noblest aspirations of the human mind, and even obedience to God's holy laws, are bartered for gold—gold—gold, till the soul forgets its destiny, and all the glorious works of its Creator!"

Mallory listened with astonishment to these words, and as the light of a lamp, near which they passed, fell full on the face of the

speaker, he was yet more surprised by the elevated and noble, though somewhat wild expression of his companion's countenance.

"I have heard that you were harshly condemned by a court martial, on insufficient evidence," he said.

"Who told you this?" demanded Blake, hastily.

"Captain Sayers once recounted the story to me, when I was a boy," was Edward's reply.

"Ah, he is a good, simple hearted man, and I thank him from my soul," exclaimed Blake, in an agitated voice; "he knows the facts, but the world in general would hear nothing in favour of one who had been condemned by men of rank and authority. I was cast out of my profession; society of my own class closed its circles for ever against me. Yet, Mr. Mallory, believe me, though cold, deliberate insult had roused me, in a burst of passion, to raise my arm against my superior officer, I was guilt-

less of all premeditated crime. That man, Mr. Mallory, was your father. I had married his sister, in opposition to his wishes, and for this, he had long meditated revenge. We served on board the same frigate, and my own impetuous character made me speedily his victim. I was a fool to be irritated by the deliberate sneers and calculated insults of my cold-hearted insolent persecutor, but by heaven, sir, my blood boils even now, when I think of it, and a man must be a pitiful scoundrel who can bear such treatment tamely."

"And after this occurred, you left England?" demanded Mallory, who sedulously avoided making any observation on his father, though he too well knew his tyrannical and sarcastic character, to doubt the truth of Blake's confession.

"My country had cast me off, like a cruel stepmother, and thenceforward the sea became my home," proceeded Blake. "I could not be idle—I bought ships—I traded between

America and China, on my own account. From time to time, I sailed with some richly freighted vessel to the English shores."

"Then it is true, that you have been engaged in smuggling?" demanded Edward, eagerly.

"Never!" answered Blake, "I have intercepted English slavers, on the high seas, and fought hard to set their wretched captives free, for I loved the adventure; I delighted in the revenge. I had been insulted and despised by the proud scions of the English aristocracy, and I exulted, when I found any way of retorting the injury. The strength that was in me, was turned from its original direction, like a tree broken by the tempest, which, if it does not die after the first shock, only survives to grow distorted. The better parts of my character found no exercise, and the worst came into unrestrained activity. I have had nothing to love, and much to hate, Mr. Mallory. This is a dangerous position."

"In truth it is," said Edward, softly, for he felt, that his love for Mary Thornton, had been the saving impulse of his life.

"My own bitter experience," continued the seaman, "caused me to declare open warfare against the social evils, of which I was myself the victim. I have become a thorough republican. I have earned sufficient now, to live without labour, and I come from time to time to England, to watch the changes in her social state. With a heart smarting under the insults of her aristocracy, I have given money freely, to aid the progress of the people, and to enable them, ultimately to emancipate themselves, from their slavery to rank and money, from the evils of complicated laws, old social prejudices and intolerant hypocrisy. I am a man of the people, and as much interested in their welfare, as you can be, Mr. Mallory."

"You mistake me entirely," said Edward, "if you suppose, that I am any friend to popular violence, or popular insubordination. On

the contrary, I am convinced that discipline and association, are the two greatest social powers. It is only by discipline that man can be rescued from the dominion of the evil which is in him! and this innate evil, is the tyrant from whom of all others, he has the most to dread. It is only by discipline, that the highest faculties of his nature can be fully developed and justly directed. Thus each man prepared to fill his post, and do his duty, in the rank he holds, the people in association, like the soldiers of a great army, will possess a moral force, and a moral courage, which no injustice can resist."

"And you think then, that no force will be necessary, to beat down the fearful inequality, which now exists in England, between the rich and the poor?" demanded Blake.

"Every time the people resort to force," was the reply, "they lose ground. Force is in itself injustice, and a breach of order; it is a crime in England, where public opinion, when well directed, can always obtain by per-

severance, the object it requires. Teach the people to desire wisely and demand steadily, and every rational freedom can in time be won."

"There is much truth in what you say," answered the seaman, "but with the state of education in England at present, it will be long till you arrive at such results."

"You are right," said Edward. "England has more to dread from social corruption, at the present day, than from political tyranny. Amongst the aristocracy, both of rank and wealth, all natural impulse is at an end. Slaves to opinion, they have become mere imitations, without genuine taste, or feeling, both in their piety, and their dissipation. One half of the women, are sinking into superstition, whilst others, impatient of female duties, confuse their heads with ill digested knowledge, and adopt a cant about high aims and female emancipation, ignorant that the true value of intellectual culture, is to develop moral strength;

and worse than all, even those who babble of freedom and progress, imitate in their dress and furniture, the corrupt style of the debauched French courts of the last century."

"Ah, sir," responded Blake, "there is nothing new in all this. Wealth without moral training, like spirits without food, ever send noxious vapours to the brain. Educate, sir, educate! if you wish to prevent national convulsions, you must improve the education of the rich, as well as that of the poor."

"Yes, in that I agree with you," was the young man's reply. "The moral corruption of the rich, has a most ruinous influence on the middle class. Betting houses, low gambling houses, horse-racing and such evils, are of noble origin, though they have descended now, to the very dregs of society; and great men make a clamour, when the humble imitate the vices of their superiors. But believe me, it is not by violence, that such things can be remedied; and though, whilst man's nature

remains unchanged, there will always be fools and rascals in the world, I have still hopes, that early moral training for all the children of the soil, may one day greatly improve the social condition of England. Emigration also, is much to be advocated, as a means of giving independence and comfort, to poor and industrious men."

"We have both the same object in view," said the seaman. "We both desire to ameliorate the position of the lower classes in England; but the means by which we would effect this, are different. The people will, however, not ask our advice, and time alone can show whether impatient indignation, or the enduring strength of moral courage, will be victorious. This is certain—the respect for old institutions is daily diminishing; whilst one half of the people progresses in knowledge, the other, by the evidence even of our police reports, is sinking rapidly into vice, debauchery, and crime. Religion has lost all hold on the minds

of many; and the active clergy, who think it their duty to chide, are insulted, or derided. The great multitude, ill paid, neglected, and surrounded by every temptation to low debauchery, and thronged together in hot beds of corruption, is a dangerous element in our social system. Should the tide of national prosperity be suddenly checked, by any evil chance, this giant mob might, in the hands of agitators, become a terrible engine of destruction."

"I trust the existing institutions of the country are sufficiently strong to put down all mob rebellions," returned Mallory. "Like the inundations of the Ocean, they can destroy; but leave, for years, all sterile where they pass. Had I the power, I would gladly save my country from such unprofitable madness; for, though I have fixed my home in America, I love old England, and ardently desire her prosperity. I cannot alter her habits, and so I

have broken the chains, which the prejudices of rank imposed upon me, and have gone to work, where I found an open field for toil. I hope, when I emigrate a second time, a dozen honest men, at least, will accompany me across the ocean, and leave room for others in this crowded country."

"You had better take Thornton with you," said the seaman. "If he is not too old to change his home, such a voyage may yet save him, perhaps, from crime and disgrace."

"Crime!" repeated Mallory, eagerly. "Surely, you cannot think that he has fallen so low?"

"If I am not mistaken," answered Blake, "this night will decide his fate."

"You mention the name of Parkins, as the writer of the note inviting him to Carnaby's Inn," said Edward. "Did you mean the attorney?"

"Certainly."

"What interest can he possibly have, in connexi n with Mr. Thornton?" asked the young man.

"You do not know the inhabitants of this town so well as I do, Mr. Mallory," answered the seaman, "or you would be aware, that this man has numerous speculations afloat. People generally consider him very rich; but it is far from being the case, at present. Many of his railway affairs have turned out very ill. He has lent large sums to the owners of the collieries, and the railroads are overturning the whole coal trade. There are people who were rich a week ago, who have not a sixpence to-day. He has lent a large sum to certain parties, who, tempted by the enormous profits on smuggled tobacco, are anxious to get a cargo into the country, without paying the duty. Should this be seized, Parkins will lose about five thousand pounds, which, at this moment, is of vast importance to him; he got Thornton into the Custom-House, and intends to make use of him,

to assist him in this wholesale smuggling. You may understand the rest. He is to be tampered with to-night."

"Good heavens! how did all this come to your knowledge?" demanded Mallory, eagerly.

"Because Parkins has already applied to me, to undertake to land the cargo, one of these dark nights, without troubling the Custom-House," replied the seaman.

"Can it be possible!"

"It is perfectly true; and when I refused, he spoke of bribing Thornton, as another alternative."

"But should Thornton become his tool in this, he will be utterly ruined!" exclaimed the young man. "Is there nothing can be done to save him?"

"I will do all in my power," was the reply. "He is a worthy, good-hearted fellow, wise in discourse, but exceedingly weak in action. We are connected by marriage; and when the finger of scorn was pointed at me, by all the

rest of the world, poor Thornton remained my friend. In fact, he was never any man's enemy, but his own. The facility of obtaining credit, has brought him to ruin; but still, he has never hitherto committed any dishonest act."

"Do you expect to find him at Carnaby's Inn?" demanded Mallory.

"We may, perhaps, meet him on his return," was Blake's reply.

Thus conversing, the seaman and Edward left the town behind them, and took the same path along the cliffs, which Thornton had previously traversed. Occasionally, a few words were exchanged between them, as they rapidly pursued their way; and, at length, Blake told his companion, he had been considering, that if they met the Custom-House Officer, it might be advisable for Edward to leave them alone together, and to return, without further delay, to inform Miss Thornton of her father's safety.

Edward was much struck by the delicacy of feeling shown in this arrangement, by a man,

whose manners were frequently abrupt and boisterous; and as anxious as Blake himself, to spare Thornton any needless pangs, and to shorten the anxiety of his daughter's suspense, he agreed at once to comply with it.

"But hush," he cried, suddenly standing still, "even now, there are steps approaching us."

The night was so dark, that no one could be distinguished at ten paces' distance, and Mallory started, when Blake, instead of replying to him, shouted with the utmost strength of his deep, rich voice, the watch word—

"Who goes there?"

"A friend!" was the prompt reply. "Jack Thornton! Is that you, Blake? I seem to know your voice."

"Yes!" cried the seaman. "What brings you here on such a night as this?"

These salutations were exchanged, till the two men came close to each other. Mallory, in the meantime, remained perfectly silent, and

having withdrawn a few paces on one side, stood still in the darkness, to be perfectly certain that the Custom-House Officer was quite safe and well, before he turned off into a cross path, in order to regain the town as quickly as possible.

CHAPTER VII.

"I AM glad we have met," said Captain Blake to Thornton, as they stood alone, upon the wild and open downs; "I want to have a little serious conversation with you; so, with your permission, I will accompany you back to the town."

"Thank you," answered Thornton; "but I thought you were going the other way."

"Only till I met you," was the reply.

"What made you expect to find me here?" demanded the Custom-House Officer, with eager trepidation.

"Because I knew you had been invited to Carnaby's Inn," answered Blake, in his usual rough, abrupt manner.

"What, you knew I was invited to Carnaby's Inn. You must be jesting!" was Thornton's agitated answer.

"Not I!" returned the seaman, laughing; "I never was more serious in my life. I know, too, whom you went to meet; and there is little jesting where Mr. Parkins is concerned."

"Mr. Parkins! Good heavens, Blake, are you dreaming!" exclaimed his companion, now thoroughly alarmed.

"I am neither jesting nor dreaming; and, perhaps, you will admit I am wide awake, when I tell you, what he met you there to talk about. Secrets, Thornton, secrets it were as well for you, you had never heard spoken."

"You are mad, surely," cried the half bewildered Thornton, grasping the arm of his companion, and standing suddenly still.

"Mad, no!" said the seaman, laughing loudly; and then suddenly lowering his voice, almost to a whisper, he added—"but you will be mad, if you are weak enough to yield to

temptation, and have anything further to do with Parkins and his tobacco."

Blake could not see the deathlike hue, which suddenly overspread the face of his companion, as he uttered these words; but he felt the hand resting on his arm tremble, and all his suspicions were converted into certainty.

"You have been tempted, wretched man," he continued. "Your honesty has given way, and you have promised to betray your trust!"

Thornton made no answer. The long, dry grass rustled in the wind, and the waves burst harshly on the stony shore, but no other sound was to be heard, for above a minute.

"Unfortunate man! you are then indeed lost!" exclaimed the seaman, after this pause. "I pity you, with my whole soul. Had I known this, only two hours sooner, I might yet have saved you."

"And now—even now—is there no way of escape!" cried the wretched Thornton, grasping the hand of his companion. "Oh, Blake,

you are a man of strong will, and fertile invention, I implore you, save me from the grasp of the wicked. Without your aid, I am indeed lost, for I have been weak—foolish—and am undone."

"Have you yet committed yourself only by promises?" was the rejoinder.

"I have promised, but nothing more," was the eager reply.

"What have you promised?"

"To overlook that which it is my duty to discover. To allow Parkins to smuggle, to a large amount, without detection."

"No such promise can be binding on any man," returned Blake rapidly. "Moreover, the proper authorities have already received information of Parkins's intended fraud; and if the ship enters the harbour of S——, the whole freight will be instantly seized."

"You terrify me!" was Thornton's tremulous exclamation.

"Why so?" rejoined Captain Blake. "You will thus be exonerated from your engagement."

"Parkins will, no doubt, accuse me of betraying him," was the reply. "He has promised to lend me a considerable sum of money, and without such help, I shall be utterly ruined. I have already been thinking this night, of taking a leap into the sea; and, by Heaven, I had better have done it. I see no other way of getting out of my difficulties."

"This is madness!" cried Blake, in a voice of authority. "It is plain, you have been drinking too much, or you would not believe that no other alternative remained for you, but death or crime. Shame, shame, Thornton; if you lack courage to face the troubles of life, whilst still an honest man, what would you do, when the disgrace of actual guilt attached to you?"

Thornton made no reply, but, overcome by his difficulties, and the quantity of spirits he

had drank, though not actually intoxicated, he burst into tears, and cried and sobbed like a child.

Blake saw, that to reason with him in this state, was utterly useless, and he remained silent for several minutes.

"I cannot go home to-night," said the Custom-House Officer, as they were approaching the town, and its lights were suddenly exposed to their view, by an abrupt turn of the path. "I durst not face Parkins to-morrow; for I am in his debt very deeply. I must keep out of the way till this business has blown over."

"Perhaps it is the wisest plan you can adopt," was Blake's reply. "Though you must not forget, that if you do not appear at the Custom-House to-morrow morning, you will, without doubt, be superseded in your office."

"That would very soon happen, at any rate," returned the wretched man, in a voice of despair. "I have been twice threatened

already, and if I fail in my promise to Parkins, he will be sure to take his revenge. Happen what may, he will, no doubt, manage to get clear out of the scrape, and to throw the blame on other people."

"But if you don't return home, have you any money with you for the expences of a journey?" demanded Blake.

"Not much," was the reply. "I changed my last half sovereign this afternoon."

"There are five sovereigns for you," said the seaman, placing the coin in his hand, as he spoke. "Before you have spent that, we shall hear from you. It is not necessary for you to go to any great distance; and you had better write to your daughter to-morrow to quiet her anxiety."

"Oh, yes! I will write to the poor girl—certainly I will write," answered Thornton. "But will you let Mr. Gerard know as soon as possible, that she is alone. Mr. Gerard will know best what is to be done about her, should

anything happen to me; and he wont let her want for anything. He is very rich, and very generous, and as fond of the girl as if he were her own father."

"Very well," said Blake. "But if this rich friend of yours is so fond of your daughter, is there no chance of his lending you a little money?"

"He has frequently done so already," said the Custom-House Officer, in a tone of mortification; "but the last time I applied to him, he told me, I must expect no further assistance from him."

"You know best! Only don't listen to any arguments of Parkins's again," returned the seaman. "Let me implore you, not to be persuaded, either by threats or promises, in a moment of desperation, to plunge into an abyss of crime and dishonour, in order to get rid of debts, from which a strong will, and a sober life, might speedily relieve you. But it is

drink—Thornton, drink, which is your ruin; and until you give up that infamous practice, it is not all the help of all your friends, which can save you from confirmed ruin."

"It was ruin first drove me to it," answered the wretched man. "I have only drunk to drown care."

"And what brought you to such a pass, but foolish speculations with borrowed money," replied Blake. "Gambling, sheer gambling. There are thousands going the same course! credit—credit—credit! a fine system for those who have nothing to lose, as long as it prospers, but destruction to many an honest man. I suppose, even the money which Parkins has offered to lend you is not his own?"

"Oh no! He said the Joint Stock Bank should advance it," returned Thornton.

"Ah, yes, I understand; he is one of the managers," was the reply; "and such are the uses which unprincipled trustees make of the

savings which industrious, honest people confide to their care. Have you any shares in this Bank?"

"None," answered Thornton.

"That is well—for I hear that there are great fears of a failure, should there be any run upon it, as has been the case in several other places. If this occurs, it will be the ruin of hundreds, for each shareholder is responsible for the debts of the whole concern, even for three years after they have sold their shares."

"Oh, I knew that," rejoined the Custom-House Officer. "Even Parkins could not persuade me, to have any concern in it."

"Such companies never bring profit to any body, but the managers and their intimate friends," said Blake, "and should this fail, even Parkins, with all his cunning, will find himself in a very awkward position."

"He will be in a terrible rage to-morrow, when he finds I am gone," muttered Thornton,

"but I cannot believe, that he is in any danger of being embarrassed about money. I only wish I were a quarter as rich as he is."

"Don't deceive yourself, Thornton, nor envy his prosperity," said the seaman, sternly. "Villany may prosper for a time, but its punishment ever comes, in one form or another, even upon earth. Wealth makes no bliss, and the poor, industrious, honest man, is far happier than the rich, if their hearts are cankered and corrupted. But, we must part here. Whether you mean to go to some distance, by the railroad, or you intend to hide in the town, I shall now leave you to proceed alone."

"I thank you, for your kind intentions, Blake," said the Custom-House Officer. "I thank you with all my soul, for the trouble you have taken, whatever may be my lot. If you knew all, I am afraid, you would not have stretched out a finger to save me; I did not think you cared so much about me, or I should

have acted very differently, in one way, from what I have done. But it is now too late to repent, or to retrieve the past."

"If I had thought you really bad, I should have left you to your fate," answered the seaman, abruptly.

"Ah, Blake, Blake," cried Thornton, with more emotion, than he had yet manifested, "you may hear something, one day, may make you curse me."

"I hope it will never come to that," was the reply, for Blake little heeded words, which he regarded as a mere consequence of Thornton's state of excitement. "But we are so near the town, that we had better part at once, so good night to you—forswear drink—and hope for better days."

Thornton grasped his companion's hand, in silence, and thus they parted.

When Mallory glided away in the darkness from Captain Blake, on the approach of Thorn-

ton, he had not proceeded many steps, when he was suddenly joined by a man, who came down another path, somewhat higher up the cliffs. Not aware, that this fellow had been tracking the steps of the Custom-House Officer, he was a good deal surprised at meeting any one, at so late an hour, in this unfrequented place, and he thought it more strange, when the man kept close to him, and though he did not speak, relaxed, or quickened his pace, in exact measure with his own. This continued, till they reached the lights of the town, when the stranger turned to take a survey of his companion.

"Good heaven, Mr. Mallory, I beg your pardon, sir!" exclaimed the sharp voice of lawyer Atkins. "I thought it was Mr. Parkins."

"How came you to expect Mr. Parkins in such a place, at this hour of the night," inquired the young man, with cool presence of mind.

Atkins was not prepared with an answer, and muttering something about business, touched his hat, and disappeared. Edward paid no attention to a circumstance apparently so insignificant, and proceeded on his way, his thoughts busily occupied, with the terrible position to which Thornton's follies had reduced him, and his heart agitated by anxiety for his daughter, to whom the knowledge of her father's actual position, must necessarily occasion great affliction.

His excitement increased, as he approached poor Mary Thornton's dwelling, under such painful circumstances, and at such an untimely hour of the night.

He thought of the happy days they had spent in early youth together, and of the apparent peaceful tranquillity of the young girl's life, when he had visited her for the first time, after his return. He had not then divined what secret causes of trouble and anxiety had already strengthened and matured

her pure and noble character, and prepared her to meet with energy, and a sublime reliance on heavenly protection, the evils for which she saw no remedy, yet, of which she could not complain, to any human being. To complain would have been to betray the secrets and blame the conduct of the father, whose errors she shrank even from acknowledging to herself, and would fain have concealed from every other creature.

Mallory, in his conversation with Mary Thornton, the preceding evening, had first learnt to estimate the full value of her patient, enduring, and loving character. She had confessed her attachment to him, and in spite of her wretched father's conduct, he rejoiced to feel, that the innocent girl, who had been the object of his long and ardent affection, with the generous self devotion, which is one of the greatest charms of the female character, was ready to say to the man of her choice, like the faithful Ruth to Naomi, "Thy land shall be

my land, and where thou goest, there will I go likewise."

Had Edward Mallory retained the aristocratic prejudices of his family, the character and position in society of Mary's father, must have imposed an insurmountable obstacle to their union; and there could have been no hope of ever obtaining Sir Thomas Mallory's consent, to his son's marriage with the daughter of a subordinate Custom-House Officer.

But Edward's estrangement from his family, he considered, had placed him at perfect liberty to follow his own inclination in a matrimonial engagement; and the painful position in which Mary was placed by her father's vices, only encreased his impatience to rescue the innocent girl from her uncongenial life, and afford her the protection she so much needed.

But ever as he approached nearer and nearer to the house, his thoughts became more anxious and depressed, and a sad presentiment, at

length, took entire possession of his mind, that in consequence of Thornton's misconduct, many painful scenes awaited them both, before their marriage could take place.

No light gleamed from any of the windows, as he drew near, for the shutters were all closed; but there were anxious watchers within; aud almost immediately after he had knocked for admission, the door was unclosed by Frank Bernard. Nelly was close behind him.

Mary, the moment she heard his voice, rushed from the parlour.

"Oh, Mr. Mallory, are you alone?" she exclaimed in tremulous accents. "Have you not found my father?"

"Be composed, dear Miss Thornton," he replied. "I have seen him—I have heard him speak—he is alive and well, and on his way hither with Captain Blake; but they had a good deal to say to each other, and wished to be alone; so I came on hither to warn you of their approach."

"What has happened to detain him so late?" she eagerly demanded.

"He was in pleasant company, I suppose," was Edward's cheerful reply, for he judged it best to conceal, if possible, for ever from the poor girl, the degrading temptation to which her father had been exposed.

"Ah, company—company," she returned, and shook her head sadly, as if she imagined that he had fallen into his old vice of drinking. "I dreaded it was thus, although he never staid so late before."

Edward involuntarily contrasted the deep feeling and anxiety which the girl had shown on her father's account, with the indifference to her happiness displayed in Thornton's conduct; not only on the present occasion, but in his daily treatment of her—and, above all, in the manner with which he had received his proposal for her hand. The sloth and lazy habits of self-indulgence, which had crept upon him, offered, in Edward's opinion, no

excuse for such carelessness towards a daughter, who, with sweet, uncomplaining patience, had hitherto devoted all her life to his service.

"Where did you find my father, Mr. Mallory?" demanded Mary, when they had entered the parlour.

"We met him on the North Cliff, returning home," he replied. "He was much surprised when he heard our voices, for see us he could not."

"It must have been terribly dark," said the girl. "The moon rises very late. It was very kind of you to go so far, and then to come all the way back here again, to bring me the first tidings. There is no one else who would have done so much for me; but I am very thankful you did return, for I was getting very, very anxious. How long do you think it will be till my father can arrive?"

"He will, doubtless, be here very shortly," replied the gentleman, "for he and Blake

could talk as they came along, and were not likely to tarry on the way."

The night was now so far advanced that not a creature was moving in the streets; and as the anxious inmates of Thornton's house sat waiting, in silence, there was something awful in the stillness. Edward gazed anxiously at Mary; she was pale and agitated, and the troubled expression of her usually placid countenance pained him deeply, as she listened eagerly to the howling of the wind, and more than once, uttered short exclamations, when she fancied that she heard the sound of footsteps. But she spoke little; it was evident that her heart was too full for words, and Mallory, who knew better than she did, the actual causes there were for dread, began, after the lapse of about a quarter of an hour, to share her anxiety.

"Hark!" he suddenly exclaimed, "there are heavy steps coming up the street. There

is your father, at last, there can be no mistake now; so you may be tranquil, dearest."

Mary sprang up, and stood listening, with her hand on his arm.

"There is only one," she said, after a short pause, "and it is not my father."

"How can you be sure of that?" demanded Edward, quickly.

"I have listened too often for his steps already, not to know his tread," she returned; "but whoever it is, he comes here," she added; and almost at the same moment, there was a rap at the street-door.

Mary, as before, sprang into the passage, whilst Frank Bernard withdrew the bolts; she gave a shrill cry of disappointment when Blake entered alone.

"Where is Thornton?" demanded Edward, for he saw that Mary was unable to utter a syllable.

"Safe—perfectly safe—but he will not come

home to-night. Miss Thornton, have no apprehensions," he added, taking the trembling girl by the hand, and leading her back into the parlour; "your father is out of all danger."

"You know, then, sir, what has become of my master?" enquired Nelly, and she and Frank Bernard stood eagerly listening for his reply.

"I do know," he said. "The paper, which Frank brought to us, has been of signal service in directing our search, and has enabled me to circumvent the plans of a very subtle enemy, who might otherwise have brought Mr. Thornton into great trouble."

"But where is he? tell me only where I can find my father?" said Mary, turning her tearful and imploring eyes on Edward.

Mallory softly pressed her hand in silence; and then, having sent Nelly and Bernard from the room, he turned to Blake, and requested

him to tell them, openly, what had become of Thornton.

"You cannot see him to-night, my dear young lady," said the seaman, with a gentle compassion, which seemed alien to his manner; "you may not, perhaps, even see him to-morrow. It is, in fact, necessary, that he should remain for a time concealed from his creditors; but as soon as you can safely join him, you shall do so."

"Alas!" said the girl, "all my worst anticipations are fulfilled," and covering her face, she wept bitterly.

A few sentences were then exchanged between Mallory and Blake, which she appeared not to hear, and then there was a profound silence in the little parlour.

There was something inexpressibly touching in the spectacle of that pretty, young, innocent creature, thus deserted by her natural protector, sitting there, in the middle of the night, with wan cheeks and tearful eyes, deserted by

her careless and reckless father, without any female relative or friend to support her, by the tender offices of affection, in the trials which his vices had brought upon her. Yet she never complained, she never uttered one syllable of reproach, against her parent; she only lamented the sufferings, which his misconduct must entail upon himself.

Yet, even in this deep affliction, her companions both felt, that she must be left alone, till the morrow. Much as Edward loved her, and much as he pitied her affliction, he had too high a respect for her maiden character, not to feel, that he must withdraw from that house, during the remaining hours of the night.

And Mary knew it likewise; arising therefore, with gentle dignity, she held out her hands to Mallory and Blake.

"I thank you both, believe me, from my heart," she said, "for all the trouble you have taken. It is late, very late; I will no

longer detain you. Let us meet again to-morrow, and then you will advise me, what course I have to take."

"Come, Mallory," said Blake to Edward, who still lingered. "Miss Thornton has need of rest, and we must not detain her longer."

So saying, he rang the bell, and when Nelly came in answer to the summons, he told her, that as her master would not return that night, he and Mr. Edward must now depart, but hoped she would pay every possible attention to her young mistress, and persuade her to lie down, and endeavour to take repose.

"Frank Bernard has promised to stay and sleep in the kitchen, so you may leave Miss Thornton without any fear, gentlemen," answered the faithful creature. "Only I do hope you will come early in the morning, for she will stand in need, both of advice and help, or I am much mistaken."

Mary reiterated this request, and her friends

having promised to comply with it, they again wished her good night, and left the house.

Miss Thornton and her trusty servant then retired to rest, but morning dawned before the girl forgot her anxieties, in a short and troubled sleep.

CHAPTER VIII.

As neither the time nor place, when Blake and Mallory left the house of Mary Thornton, was suitable for intimate discourse, and both were fatigued by the various events of the day, they parted almost immediately afterwards, with an agreement, that the seaman should call on the young gentleman at the George Inn, at an early hour in the morning.

Blake did not fail to keep his appointment, and found, though it was only eight o'clock, that Edward had already breakfasted, and was anxiously awaiting his arrival. It was strange, how a few hours had entirely changed the feelings of these two men towards each other. The utmost confidence was suddenly established

between them; and Edward, no longer repulsed by the rough and abrupt manners of Blake, at length understood the value of his turbulent, but honest, and generous character, and entertained a high respect for his abilities, clear good sense, and promptitude of decision.

The seaman on his side, had conceived an affectionate regard for the young man, such as his own father had never felt, and their natural love of activity, and a nobleness of feeling which was common to them both, at once formed a bond of sympathy between them.

Blake thought it his duty, when they met at the Hotel, to inform Edward of every thing he knew, or surmised, concerning the position and liabilities of Thornton.

"I see you have an attachment to the daughter," he said, "and as her relative, though a distant one, being the nearest she probably has in the world, I think it my duty to stand in her father's place, under present circumstances. I must tell you, therefore, that she is not only a beggar, but the daughter of a

man, weighed down, and shackled body and soul, by his debts. If you marry her with this knowledge, that is your own affair."

There was a nobleness, in this frank declaration of the blunt seaman, which greatly increased the respect which Edward had already conceived for him, yet he did not immediately reply to it. Blake watched him keenly. He was curious to know how he would pass through this ordeal, to which he had with premeditation exposed him, though he trusted it would only place in a clearer light, the strength and purity of his love for Mary Thornton.

Many prudent men, no doubt, would say that his expectations were overstrained and fantastic, but that rough wanderer in the byways of the world, felt that Edward Mallory would fall short of the character he had conceived of him, if he failed to fulfil them.

His silence first inspired Blake with mistrust, and though he kept his inquisitive eyes fixed upon him, he could not decipher his thoughts; but though irritated and restless, he did not

speak again, and clasping his hands tightly over the head of his stick, endeavoured to conceal his impatience.

"Can you give me any idea of the amount of Mr. Thornton's debts?" inquired Edward, at last, in a very quiet voice.

"He told me, only a week ago, when we met at his coffee-house," answered Blake, "that the most pressing amounted to three hundred and fifty pounds; but he has other liabilities, which, as far as I can ascertain, are somewhere about a thousand." The seaman looked sharply at his companion's face as he uttered these words; but it remained perfectly unchanged.

"It is a large debt, for a man to have incurred, who, it appears, has not a sixpence to meet it," answered Mallory.

"Yes," said Blake, "he had good connexions, and was much liked in early life, being always an agreeable boon companion, so people were ready to help him after his first

failure, and he attempted to get up a second business, but it did not answer, for he spent both the profits and the capital. At last, when his aristocratic friends got him into the Custom-House, he quieted his creditors, by engaging to pay them by degrees, out of his salary. Strange to say, Parkins advanced him money, from time to time. It seemed as if there was some secret compact between them. Mr. Gerard, too, assisted him, and so matters have shuffled on, for years, but at length, the creditors became clamorous. He cannot get clear as an insolvent, without losing his appointment. But that now is inevitable, and he can no longer do himself any harm by taking the benefit of the Act."

"And his creditors, what will they get?" demanded Edward, who had listened with profound interest to this narrative.

"His creditors will get nothing," said Blake, coolly. "They are, excepting Parkins and Gerard, almost all poor men, struggling as he has been doing, to make a livelihood, and

some of them are half ruined by his extravagance."

"You are right, Captain Blake," said Edward, now speaking with great animation, "it would be impossible for me to marry a girl, under such circumstances. Debt is dishonourable in my eyes."

"Ah, I feared it would be so!" exclaimed the seaman, striking his fist on the table, and then starting up, and rapidly pacing the room. "I am deeply grieved for the poor girl's sake, and what is to become of her, heaven only knows. I must adopt her myself, I suppose, if she is left destitute!"

"Have no anxiety on her account," answered the young man, with extreme agitation. "You surely cannot think me base enough to desert her, because she has the misfortune to have a worthless father."

"I beg your pardon, if I misunderstood you," returned Blake very stiffly, "but your words expressed as much."

"I said, my dear sir, that I could not marry a girl on whose father's head the victims he had deluded and plundered, by means of a false credit, were daily heaping curses," returned Mallory, with solemn earnestness, "but when the just demands of this man's creditors are satisfied—and not till then—I shall still wed Mary Thornton."

"Ah, but for that happy event to occur, is utterly hopeless," said Blake, by no means pleased with this reply. "You may indeed make such an engagement without any fear of ever being called upon to perform it."

"Do you think me so base, as to resort to such a miserable subterfuge?" demanded Mallory, blushing deeply. "No, Captain Blake, Mary Thornton is more precious to me, than all the wealth of this world! Had I thousands, I would give them freely to secure her happiness, but, thank heaven, and my own industry, I have enough to liquidate her father's debts, and something still, when that is done,

will remain to pay our passage to the free land and fruitful fields, where my strong arm will suffice to maintain her.

"Noble, generous fellow!" cried Captain Blake, giving Mallory, in his unbounded exultations, a stroke on the back, which would have brought a weaker man to the ground. "This is true nobility; worth a whole parliamentary session of palarvering about the condition of the poor. This is the Christian doctrine put in action, which so many preach about, and so few perform—this is true Christianity. *Do unto others as you would be done by.* You are a happy man, Mr. Mallory, you will always be a happy man, for your heart is in the right place, and you are not dependent on other men's labour, for the means of support. Many who roll in wealth, may envy you."

"You rate my purpose too highly," said the young man, as quietly as before. "I am only seeking my own gratification, for I have loved

Mary Thornton from a child, and my future life would be worthless to me, without her."

"Yes, yes, young man," said Blake, with an agitation little to be expected from one of his rough exterior, when speaking on such a subject, "you are perfectly right to make sacrifices to such a feeling; an honest love is the parent of all virtues, and without love man has but half a soul."

"You are Thornton's relative, and appear well acquainted with his affairs," said Edward, in a calm voice, and business-like manner; "can you direct me what steps I ought to take in this affair, which the absence of Thornton and Mr. Gerard, to whom I would otherwise have applied, renders both difficult and unpleasant to bring to a speedy conclusion."

"I should certainly have advised you to have consulted Mr. Gerard," answered the seaman, "for he is Thornton's friend, and a man of noble character, and during his absence, it

appears to me, you had better apply to the solicitor he usually employs. Miss Thornton will probably be able to direct you to his residence. Be assured whatever I can do to assist you, I shall most readily undertake, for if you are really resolved to make the sacrifice of fifteen hundred pounds, the sooner, on every account, that it is done, the better."

"Such is my opinion," returned Edward. "But we had better go, without further delay, to inquire how Miss Thornton has passed the night, and after that, I shall thank you to visit Mr. Gerard's solicitor, on my account, and give him full authority to make an arrangement with Thornton's creditors. You can understand, Captain Blake, that there are many reasons, why I should not wish to appear in the transaction. It can be settled, without my name being used."

"I believe you are right," replied the seaman, regarding his companion with increased admiration, for he duly estimated the perfect

simplicity, and the absence of anything like parade in his conduct.

Captain Blake and Edward Mallory then left the inn together, and took the way to Mary Thornton's house. They spoke little as they walked along; but they were both musing on the extraordinary train of circumstances, by which their present intimacy had been brought about, and both were forcibly impressed by the conviction, that an over-ruling Providence directs the course of man, leaving him, however, free to choose the good or evil, when the moment of temptation arrives.

"I have been led to form a wrong estimation of your character, Captain Blake," said Mallory, at length; "or we had not so long remained strangers."

"Perhaps, I too erred in the same manner," answered the seaman. "I was too prone to believe, that nothing good could come out of Stoke Court; but such prejudices are, I trust, for ever done away, between us. I am not a

poor man, Mr. Mallory, and I cannot allow the whole weight of Thornton's debts to devolve on you. You must now consider, that I married your aunt, and allow me to bear half the burthen."

"I thank you," answered the young man, firmly, but not proudly. "But I cannot accept your offer. I already regard Thornton as my father-in-law, and I alone must be responsible for his engagements. Have no anxiety for me, I shall not be without money after the whole sum is paid."

"Be it as you will," rejoined Blake. "I shall endeavour to serve you in other ways—so no more professions, but now to work."

Edward laughed, and assured him, that he should not forget his promises, when he had need of a friend's assistance, and with rapid steps they hurried on.

In less than five minutes they reached Miss Thornton's house, and a scene presented itself there, which filled them both with dismay and

consternation. The street door stood open; a cart, half filled with furniture, was drawn up before it, loud voices were heard disputing in the passage, and everything appeared in utter confusion.

When they entered, the first person they saw in the parlour, was a bailiff; they required no further explanation; it was at once plain, that there was an execution in the house.

The pretty little room, where Edward had first seen Mary, after his return, in innocent peacefulness, her own taste giving everything around her a beauty and a charm—the place which he had felt hallowed by her presence, and which he could not approach without agitation—was now in desolate disorder; stripped of its furniture, and trodden by rude men, who cared for nothing but the few pounds they hoped to obtain for the goods they carried off.

Nelly was up-stairs, talking to a little man, with a yellow face, who was kneeling before a

trunk, packing up the clothes, which another pulled out of a chest of drawers. Mary Thornton sat pale and trembling, watching their operations, as if scarcely conscious of what they were doing. Her full, moist eyes, her neglected hair, and the listlessness of her whole figure, had something terrible in their contrast to her former cheerful neatness.

It was indeed a scene of ruin and desolation, such as Hogarth would have depicted, and which might well have been appended to a more recent series of the same terrible characteristic moral paintings, as those of that great artist, though by another hand, called "The Bottle."

Yet, Mary Thornton, the poor, helpless victim, had struggled hard, by economy and industry, to avert the calamity. But woman's help, though precious in aid of man's endeavours, is utterly insufficient to save, when, engrossed by reckless extravagance and vice, he leaves her to stem the torrent of misfortune

alone, without even a full knowledge of the impending ruin.

Edward Mallory made no answer to Nelly's complaints, nor did he approach Miss Thornton, but he demanded of the man, directing those employed in removing the furniture, what was the amount of the debt, for which the seizure had been made.

"Ninety pounds, sir," he replied.

"Good Heaven, was there no one to advance this sum, to prevent these violent measures?" exclaimed the young man.

"I sent off to Mr. Gerard, sir," answered Nelly; "but he is in London. Frank then went to seek you and Captain Blake; but, no doubt, you were already on your way here, before he reached your inn."

Mallory did not reply to Nelly's words, but turning to the man, whom he had before addressed, he begged him to wait only half-an-hour, and that he should then be paid the money."

"Promises, sir," was the rude answer.

"More than two years' rent is due. There have been too many promises broken already."

"But if I give you a cheque on my banker for the amount, will you then desist?" inquired the young man.

"How do we know who you are, sir?" was the insolent reply.

"I am Edward Mallory, second son of Sir Thomas Mallory, of Stoke Court. Surely that name is good security in this neighbourhood, for more than a hundred pounds?"

"I cannot say, upon my word, sir," returned the man. "Mr. Oswald Mallory, the Baronet's eldest son, is the principal creditor."

"Surely not for the house rent!" exclaimed Edward, in amazement.

"He has bought up many of the debts, sir, and he particularly directed that we were to make the seizure this morning, and that we were to refuse all compromise. He knows very

well, there is nothing to be got by listening to promises."

"This surpasses belief," were the words which burst involuntarily from Edward's lips, for, though his indignation almost mastered his self-command, he was unwilling to express it to those who were only servile agents of his brother's tyranny. He understood, at once, that no compromise could now be made—that the whole persecution was the consequence of jealousy and revenge—and that the man, who under the influence of these evil passions, could direct such measures, was utterly incapable of relenting in his purpose.

There was nothing to be done, but to remove Mary as quickly as possible from that house, of which Oswald Mallory had taken forcible possession, in the guise of justice, as the first act of that vengeance which he had sworn to wreak on her.

"Miss Thornton," he said to the young lady,

who having heard what had passed, now arose and stood with dignified tranquillity, awaiting his decision. "This is no longer an abode for you. If you will place yourself under my protection, and that of my uncle, Captain Blake, who is awaiting us below, we will at once conduct you to a place where you may at least, be exempt from insult and outrage."

"I am ready to go wherever you think best," was Mary's reply; "but I could not bear to be a burthen to you. Neither you nor Captain Blake has a home, but Nelly has already proposed to take me with her, to her brother's house, till we hear tidings of my father."

"It is a poor place," said the servant, "but there are two rooms up stairs, which I have rented and furnished, ready for my marriage, and I shall be delighted to do all in my power to make Miss Thornton as comfortable as if it were a palace."

When Blake heard this proposal, and under-

stood the locality whither his young cousin proposed to remove, he declared, at once, that it was a low part of the town, totally unfit for her to remain in, even for a night.

But Mary Thornton, with perfect calmness, had made up her mind as to the course she had to pursue, and would hear of no objections to the place, on account of its poverty, or its being in a quarter only inhabited by the working-classes.

"It is open and airy," she said, "and if the lodging is humble, it is the fitter for me now. I have been playing the lady long enough at other people's expense. Don't remonstrate Mr. Mallory, even to you I cannot yield this point. I must live till my father returns, with the least possible cost, and I must live in concealment. I must avoid every risk of involving you in further contests with your brother. My peace of mind might otherwise be for-ever destroyed."

"Ah, Mary, you are a noble creature," said

the young man, sadly. "I understand your motives, and you shall be obeyed, although it is a cruel trial to me, to allow you to be placed in such a position."

"Before long you shall find me a better home," answered the girl, in a low, tremulous voice, as she passed her arm through his; "till then, let us forget pride. It will help us very little."

"Or rather not at all," said Blake, who followed them to the door. "No, no, my little cousin, you are the greatest philosopher of us all, and indeed it is very true, that women ever bear the reverses of fickle fortune, with far more patience and fortitude than men."

"We can bear up against all but the want of affection," murmured Mary, in a low voice, and as she uttered these words, the remembrance of the pleasant days of childhood, spent in the house she was leaving, of the hours she had there passed during Edward's absence, in

happy dreams of his return, of the joy with which she had there first heard the confession of his love; all thronged upon her mind, till her courage at length gave way, and pressing her handkerchief before her eyes, she left the deserted house of her youth in tears.

Mallory understood and compassionated her feelings, but he could offer her no consolation, and silently pressed her hand which rested on his arm, rejoicing in his heart, that he was with her to afford her support and protection at such a moment of painful trial.

In the meantime, Nelly had not forgotten little Lilly, and as the child was still unable to walk, she placed her on a truck, which she had procured for the removal of her own things. Taking a short way through back streets, the faithful creature arrived with the child, and the little luggage they possessed, at her brother's house, a few minutes before Miss Thornton reached it, with Edward Mallory and Captain

Blake, and calling her brother's wife to her aid, they carried Lilly up stairs and laid her on the bed.

The little stir which the servant's arrival occasioned, in the usually quiet street, had already subsided, and inquisitive housewives had withdrawn their heads from the windows before the arrival of Mary Thornton, with her companions, and much to her satisfaction, she entered her new dwelling unobserved.

Nelly received the party with bustling satisfaction, and it was indeed a proud moment to her, to be able to offer the shelter of her own home, humble though it was, to the young mistress, in whose service so many years of her life had been passed.

CHAPTER IX.

The apartment, where Miss Thornton had been driven by Oswald Mallory's heartless persecution to seek a refuge, was decently furnished, and as Nelly insisted on serving her young mistress, the same as she had always done, though she refused to accept of wages, Edward Mallory was pleased to find, that, in this humble abode there was a greater prospect of comfort for the deserted girl, than he had at first anticipated. There was a small room arranged as a sitting-room, entirely for her use, and the young people anticipated with pleasure, that they should be able to meet undisturbed, whilst from the secluded situation of the house there

appeared little danger of Mary's being traced thither by Oswald Mallory.

The news of Mr. Thornton's sudden disappearance, and that an execution had been put into his house, quickly spread over the whole town, for though the Custom-House Officer was a man of little importance, his former position in society made him generally known, and a piece of news, whoever it may concern, is a variation of the ordinary monotony of a country town, greedily snatched at by a certain class, who have little else to do, but to talk about their neighbours. No one grieved for the unfortunate man, except his old acquaintance, Captain Sayers. He was truly distressed, both on Thornton's and Mary's account, that their establishment had been broken up, under such painful circumstances; and to himself it was a real misfortune, for he no longer knew where to spend his evenings.

The first time he saw Blake, he enquired after Mary with great interest, and he could

not help feeling a good deal surprised that the seaman, who had only recently returned to the town, appeared to be much more intimate with Thornton, and better acquainted with his affairs than he was.

"We were old friends, very old friends," he said, "yet he never hinted anything about difficulties to me, and he always gave such nice little suppers, that I never suspected for an instant that they were not paid for. Miss Thornton was an excellent housekeeper, that is quite certain, she knew how to make everything comfortable and cheerful in a house. That is a great virtue in a woman, Captain Blake."

"I suppose so," was the seaman's quiet reply.

"If I were not a bachelor," continued Sayers, "I should at once have offered Miss Thornton a home under my own roof; for she is a nice girl—a very nice girl; but I don't know why—when I spoke this morning of in-

viting her, my housekeeper did not seem to approve of it; she said it would be improper! for the life of me, I cannot see the impropriety of the thing; not in the least."

"Bachelor's housekeepers are often rather particular, about their master's visitors," answered Blake, drily. "But she need not have been alarmed; Miss Thornton would not have accepted your invitation. She wishes to remain secluded, and to escape all observation, until she becomes Mr. Edward Mallory's wife."

"Ah, a very good match for her—a fine young man," answered the Captain; "but what in the name of fortune have you done with her father?"

"I!" exclaimed Blake; "what should I do with him?"

"You cannot deny, that you were very anxious about him, last night," said Sayers, inquisitively. "You seemed to know there was something terrible going to happen to him.

Do you know there are people in the town, who think he has come to no good end?"

"Credulous fools, who love marvels, always make wonders out of the most common occurrence," was the reply.

"Ah, but it is very strange," answered the old man. "He was seen on the North Cliff, near midnight. It was a very strange coincidence, that he should go to such a place, at such an hour! and he had invited me to tea, too! a very strange coincidence, indeed. If the poor fellow has really been made away with, it would be yet more extraordinary, and I do feel a weight about my heart, a sort of presentiment, that we shall never drink another glass of brandy and water together, which is really most remarkable."

"That is very distressing, certainly," returned Blake, laughing in a way which Captain Sayers thought very unfeeling. "But cheer up, my old ship-mate, there are plenty of other

people in the world, who will be as happy to drink grog with you, as poor Thornton, and as far as his interest is concerned, he has drunk a good deal too much, already."

"Oh," said the Captain, "you may laugh but it is very hard, to see all one's old friends passing away. I shall be quite alone at last, for I hate novelty; I cannot get attached to new people, more than to new inventions. They are not like those we knew in our youth; people are not so sincere; for the fact is, we are all living in an artificial state. Well—well give my regards to Miss Thornton, an tell her, I am truly sorry for her—I am distressed I can do no more."

"No, no, don't make your housekeeper jealous," answered Blake, laughing more than ever. "You might find it exceedingly disagreeable, though in our present artificial state nothing could be more natural, if Miss Thornton came to stay with you. Good day, Captain Sayers. Pray let me know if you hear anything of Thornton."

"Certainly—certainly," said the old man; and the seaman, without waiting to hear more, hurried on his way.

Such was his friend's regret for the poor Custom House Officer, and he would soon have been altogether forgotten by his ordinary associates, had not self interest kept him in the remembrance of some, and the mystery attached to his disappearance, excited the curiosity of others.

During the whole of the following week, Mr. Gerard was absent on business, and his solicitor found considerable difficulty, in exactly ascertaining the extent of Thornton's debts. Blake proposed calling the creditors together, and offering a compromise, but to this, Mallory would not consent. He persisted in his determination, to pay every one to the uttermost farthing, but wished Blake to appear as the only responsible person in the transaction, so that he might avoid all chance of a collision with his brother.

During all this time, no one heard anything of Thornton. He never wrote to his daughter, nor did he inform Blake where he had sought concealment.

Parkins was struck with consternation, when he heard of the disappearance of the Custom House Officer, and his rage and anxiety deprived him of all rest, when day after day passed over, without his being able to obtain any tidings of him. Every morning when he arose, he dreaded to hear of the arrival of the vessel with its precious cargo, in the port, and he watched the winds with feverish apprehension. Still, as long as it did not appear, he hoped that Thornton might return, in time to perform his promises. But this hope was suddenly dispelled, by the intelligence given to him by Atkins in one of their evening meetings at the Black Bull, that the absent functionary had been superseded in his office.

"There are very strange reports in circulation," added this busy informer. "Some

suspect he has been murdered by a party of smugglers, who enticed him to Carnaby's Inn, the evening of his disappearance; others say he has been playing tricks at the Custom House, and has got out of the way, for fear of detection.

"And what do you think?" demanded Parkins, who was struck, on suddenly looking up, by the strange, and sinister expression of his companion's countenance. "How comes any one to suppose, that he went to Carnaby's Inn?"

"Oh, Mr. Parkins, you and I know he did," replied Atkins, laying his finger in a most significant manner on his purple nose.

"What do you mean?" enquired the lawyer impatiently.

"Just the simple fact, and nothing more," answered his companion, who felt, with vulgar exultation, that he now had his tyrannical employer entirely in his power.

When rich intriguers work by humble tools,

and fancy, whilst lackied with fawning servility, and flattered by needy cunning, that there is honesty in slaves, they are very apt to forget, that these minions are, like themselves, actuated only by self-interest, cringing to be one day tyrants in their turn. Whilst the lust of gain is their sole inspiration, they are fools enough to believe, that their dependents, good, simple souls, are influenced by an honest affection for themselves—for the employer, the secrets of whose soul, with all its baseness, are daily revealed to them.

Whilst Atkins was betraying others, Mr. Parkins had never suspected the possibility of his being false to him, when it suited his purpose. But now a sudden terror came over him, that this man knew more than he had considered it safe to confide to him.

"Yes," said Atkins, with infinite assurance. "It is no use making any denials or mysteries to me, about this matter, for, I can take my

oath, before any magistrate, that you left Carnaby's Inn at twelve o'clock on Friday night, in company with Mr. Thornton, who had come there, in consequence of your invitation. As this man has not since been heard of, these are rather suspicious circumstances, you must admit."

"What, in the name of fortune, you don't mean to insinuate, that I have murdered the fellow?" cried Parkins, now completely roused, and his keen eyes, which he habitually veiled like a sleeping tiger, with the dimness of stupidity, flashed, suddenly, so fierce and bright, that Atkins, callous as he was, felt half frightened from his purpose. But his courage soon returned, for though he knew the suspicion of murder, in this case, was ridiculous, he was acquainted with other incontestible facts, which it would be equally unpleasant to Mr. Parkins to have disclosed.

"No! no! sir!" he replied, "you and I are

not such fools, as to commit murder, and compromise ourselves without any sufficient reason. We don't want men's lives, we only want their obedience and their money."

And then the fellow laughed, as if he had said something exceedingly witty.

But Mr. Parkins was of a different opinion.

"If you have anything further to say," he answered, in his usual, calm, caustic manner, "I request you will speak plainly, and concisely. I have no time to waste in listening to insinuations. Come at once to the point. What do you know about this man Thornton?"

"I have already told you part of the truth," said Atkins. "If you want to hear the whole, I will add, that I listened to every word that passed between you, in the parlour of Carnaby's Inn. What do you say to that, Mr. Parkins?"

The lawyer kept his eyes fixed on the ground whilst Atkins spoke. If he was annoyed, it

was impossible to discover it, from his impassive countenance.

"You did—did you, Mr. Atkins!" he said, very coolly. "I once heard some one moving behind the partition; I am glad to find it was only you, on whose discretion I can rely. You heard about the expected cargo, I suppose?"

"Yes, every word," answered the pettifogger, who was somewhat puzzled by this unexpected treatment.

"It was all nonsense," returned the lawyer, in the same tone in which he had before spoken. "You probably know, as well as I do, that no American vessel has since arrived in the harbour. I only wanted to put Thornton's honesty to proof. There was some suspicion that he had been tampered with in another quarter. Smuggling is quite out of my line; but, as you heard, he yielded to my proposal, and has, in consequence, been since superseded."

"Ah, indeed," responded Atkins, in such a

tone, that Mr. Parkins perfectly understood, that he did not believe one word of this invention. "Some said, he only disappeared to get out of the way of his creditors," he added; "but, I suppose, you have heard, sir, that Captain Blake is paying all his debts."

"Can this be possible!" was the attorney's exclamation.

"It is a fact."

"Then he has turned informer!" cried Parkins, with more consternation than he had yet betrayed, and forgetting, in his astonishment, the falsehood he had just been trying to impose on his companion. He felt the blunder he had committed, almost as soon as the words had escaped his lips.

"Some say the money comes from Mr. Edward Mallory, who is engaged to marry Miss Thornton," continued Atkins.

This time, Parkins made no reply.

"This Mallory, probably, knows all," pursued the pettifogger; "and has advised Thorn-

ton to keep out of the way. Observe, I only speak from report; the young gentleman has not openly appeared in this business. But are you aware, Mr. Parkins, that he was lounging about the North Cliffs, the very night you were at Carnaby's Inn."

"No, I saw no one," answered the attorney, with a very uneasy expression of countenance.

"At first, I saw nothing," said Atkins; "but I heard people talking in the darkness, as I was returning home. I recognised Thornton's voice; and five minutes afterwards, I came suddenly on Mr. Edward Mallory, and walked back with him into the town."

"And Thornton was with him, you say?" demanded Parkins.

"Not then," was the reply. "I heard Thornton speaking to some one, near the edge of the cliff, only two minutes before I joined Mallory; but he was then alone."

"This is strange," muttered the attorney.

"Yes, very strange," responded Atkins, looking keenly into his companion's averted eyes. "If you think he knows too much, sir, some use might be made of these circumstances. Men have been accused of murder on much slighter grounds."

Parkins looked the pettifogger full in the face, as he concluded these words, and then laughed.

"If you were to accuse Mallory of the murder of Thornton," he said, "then Thornton would be brought forward alive and well, to attest his innocence; and really, I see no occasion for taking so much trouble. If the poor fellow likes to keep out of the way of his creditors for awhile, why should we disturb him?"

Atkins understood, at once, the truth of this assertion, and Parkins's motive, for wishing Thornton to remain absent. But it suggested a new idea to his mind; he began to suspect,

that the lawyer had really put the Custom-House Officer out of the way, as a dangerous witness.

"You are very fond of accusations, Atkins," continued his patron, laughing; "but I am afraid you have not done much good, by the charge you brought against Mathew Fuller. What has become of the fellow?"

"He is still in confinement," was the answer; "but he will probably be released, after his next examination. Nobody could foresee that Mr. Gerard would busy himself in defence of a strolling player."

"Ah, that radical Gerard has his finger in everything," said Parkins. "Nevertheless, Atkins, you must not forget, that I am indebted to you for all the trouble you have taken, as much as if you had succeeded. You must consider in what way I can most advantageously serve you."

"Thank you, Mr. Parkins," returned At-

kins. "I believe money is always most acceptable."

"I shall not forget you," said the attorney; "but, at present, if you have nothing more to communicate, I must wish you good evening."

They then parted, without any further explanation. Atkins perfectly understood, that under pretence of being rewarded for his prosecution of the actor, he was really to be paid for his silence, with regard to the lawyer's smuggling transaction; and he was quite willing to hold his tongue, provided it was made worth his while. But uncertain whether a larger profit might not be secured, by informing against his old employer, he resolved not to commit himself rashly, but to be ready to take either side, which should eventually appear likely to be most advantageous.

And this was a man, in whom the people trusted!

The next day, nothing was talked of in the

town, but the extraordinary disappearance of Mr. Thornton. Reports that he had been last seen on the North Cliff, in the middle of the night, were generally repeated. Some hinted at the possibility of murder; others, delighted with the excitement of a tale of horror and mystery, eagerly repeated it with many embellishments; then the name of Edward Mallory was whispered in connection with the story, though no one knew with whom it had originated; and such was the interest this added to the adventure, and so eager was every one to repeat so extraordinary a fact, that it was soon universally asserted, that it could scarcely be doubted, that Mr. Thornton, the Custom-House Officer, had been cruelly murdered by one of his most intimate friends. It was whispered in secret, that this friend was that very eccentric and unprincipled young man, Mr. Edward Mallory, who was well known to be a radical and a communist.

Such is the progress of a lie—more especially

when an unprincipled fellow like Atkins has an interest in its propagation. He had taken advantage of Mr. Parkins's hint, and resolved to do everything in his power to compel Thornton to appear, and confirm his evidence against the attorney, whose bribe had proved too small to content him, so that he decided to secure a second profit by turning informer, for he had no doubt, that though the American vessel might be for some time delayed by contrary winds, it must, before long, come into port with its secret cargo of tobacco.

Parkins, in the meantime, sent out a pilot boat, at a considerable expence, to lie in wait for the Nancy of New York, and conduct her into another port.

But the attorney was far from tranquil. He began to feel, that he was no longer regarded with the respect to which he had long been accustomed, by some of the first men in the town. His reputation for

wealth began to be questioned. Many people were anxious about the solidity of the Joint Stock Bank, and it was well known, that should that ever stop payment, Mr. Parkins must be a ruined man.

Mr. Oswald Mallory was by no means so attentive as Miss Parkins considered she had a right to expect; and in spite of various hints from her father, and very languishing looks from the young lady, he had not yet proposed. It was in vain, that Mrs. Parkins gave him many excellent dinners; he only went away and laughed at her, for her ostentation, and eagerness to be thought genteel.

He had been greatly annoyed, when the solicitor, employed by Blake, had offered to pay the debts which Thornton's creditors had transferred to him; and he instructed Parkins, whom he employed, to throw every possible difficulty in the way of an arrangement, which the lawyer, for his own purposes, most readily

did. Oswald was not less anxious than the attorney, to prevent the return of the Custom-House Officer, for, he trusted, that if Mary Thornton remained long without her father's protection, some way might be devised, of get ting her into his power, or of taking further revenge for her insolent rejection of his proffered love.

CHAPTER X.

Mary Thornton and little Lilly continued, day after day, the inmates of Nelly's humble dwelling; and Edward Mallory was their frequent visitor. The child would have been happy with her new friends, had she not been inconsolable for her father's absence; but even when she worked, or read, by the side of Miss Thornton, or listened to her gentle lessons, she would occasionally burst into tears, declaring that she knew her father was dead, and that she felt quite sure she should never see him again.

It was in vain that Mary attempted to reason with her, and she did not wish it otherwise; for she loved the child the more for the

fidelity of her attachment to the father, who, however he might have erred in life, had ever been tender and most loving to her.

Sometimes, when she witnessed these strong proofs of affection in Lilly, she reproached herself for her less vivid feelings towards her own parent, both during her childhood, and in later years; and she might have supposed this to originate in a want of natural feeling, had not her passionate love for Edward Mallory taught her all the devoted tenderness and ardour of her heart.

And that attachment to her promised husband now constituted the whole happiness of her life, as she learnt daily, more and more, how much he prized her love.

Her dwelling-place was a small, low, white-washed room, looking out upon a broken green bank, where chickens were scratching up the turf in the sunshine—where pigs were turning up the dunghills, and clothes hanging bleaching in the wind, whilst the children of the

poor, in undisciplined idleness, played and quarrelled among the birds, and the animals, and the dirt, the whole day long. But Mary felt no disgust at all these objects; all within her humble abode was cleanliness, and order, and cheerfulness, and love, and she was interested in watching without, the habits of the surrounding poor, for she had never been brought up to regard them as a class from which it was necessary for her dignity, or her happiness, that she should stand apart.

The respect with which all the people regarded her, whom she visited in their cottages, confirmed her previous conviction, that love and charity are the true engines of civilisation; but it is the charity which has gentle compassion for the failings of others, not the degrading charity of almsgiving. Know thyself, was the aphorism of a great philosopher; but to arrive at true wisdom, another lesson must now be added—know thy brethren.

Those possessed of wealth and power have,

for centuries, regarded the poor as beings of a different nature to themselves; from whom, however, they might elevate themselves by industry or talent; the original stain of plebeian birth, like the colour of the negro, could never be obliterated. Even now, the upper classes tremble to learn, that their inferiors are as capable of reasoning, and of acquiring new ideas, as themselves, and would fain arrest their progress. But the effort is vain; for the people, on their side, have already discovered the secret, by which the power of their masters has alone been successfully resisted. That secret is association. Even the greatest Emperors of Rome fell when they were deserted by their partizans. Alone they could do nothing. All progress has been affected by association. The church, with all its brotherhoods and bishoprics—the law, with all its officers—the trades, with their guilds, are all associations, which have, at different times, successfully resisted the tyranny of oppressors,

and aided the development of social liberty. Industrious poverty must now associate to oppose the despotism of capital. But it must not unite to take up arms; it must not unite to waste time and strength, in vain and ill-directed disputes with the authority of the rich, with which it is yet unequal to cope; it must unite for its own improvement; it must unite to educate itself, to obtain knowledge, to acquire moral strength; to overcome the vices of ignorance, to develop all the resources of industry, and finally to amass property.

Would a hundred men agree to save fourpence daily from the ale-house, at the end of four years, they would be possessed of above five hundred pounds, and so on in proportion, till themselves possessed of capital, they might successfully carry on their trades on their own account.

But all this must be done with discipline. Their governors, like the members of all corporations, must be elected; and the law

must make the managers of their funds responsible agents.

Every truly great work in England, even her railroads, are the works of associations—of associated capital; and labour is the poor man's capital, which, by prudence and economy, may be converted into sterling gold. This is the true alchemy and the only art of transmutation, which philosophy has yet discovered.

The most fatal obstacle to this glorious progress, is neither the insufficiency of the laws affecting the security and transfers of small properties, nor the difficulty of making small investments, nor the low rate of wages, nor over-time, nor piece-work. All these might quickly be done away with, had the working classes not to contend with greater evils—and those evils are their own reckless vices, their disunion, and their want of moral strength, and confidence in each other. In the pursuit of pleasure, in drinking, and, some-

times, even in betting, they dissipate the wages, which, if judiciously applied, would suffice to emancipate them from the tyranny of harsh masters, and to win for them the elective franchise, in defiance of all the opposition, which the aristocracy could throw in the way of household suffrage.

Such were Edward Mallory's views, and frequently, as he sat beside Mary in her humble lodging, watching the skilful labours of her needle, he explained to her, the plans he had devised for the improvement of his fellow-creatures, and the knowledge he had acquired of various classes of society, during the strange vicissitudes of his active and varied life.

But even then, he did not cease to investigate the existing evils of our social state; and it was a mournful spectacle for a lover of the human race, and, above all, of his countrymen, to behold the poor creatures, who, uneducated, or casting aside the advantages of civilisation,

and giving themselves up to the indulgence of its vices, live in a state of worse than savage debauchery, festering, like a foul disease of pestilential corruption, in the very vitals of the most enlightened and industrious nation in the world. And the more he became acquainted with the haunts of misery, the more entirely he was convinced, that its sole cause in England is ignorance, and the want of moral training.

Edward Mallory felt keenly, when initiated into these social mysteries, the danger of the upper classes holding themselves apart from the sons of labour, and contenting themselves by merely administering to the wants of the lower orders, instead of endeavouring to improve their characters, and soften their feelings of asperity towards their superiors, by the influence of example, and of Christian love. He saw how necessary it was, for the powerful, by their superior knowledge and education, to direct the present agitation of the popular mind,

to social improvements, by which the whole human race may be benefitted, instead of vainly endeavouring to resist the progressing force of social development.

Edward Mallory saw, and comprehended that the mighty torrent of democracy which is sweeping on over the whole earth, will do no man injury, if it is directed by intellectual superiority and the justice of wisdom, into a wide and unobstructed course, where it may gradually extend, to fructify and not destroy.

Many of the first people in the town, contented with the enjoyment of their usual luxuries, and engrossed by their own affairs, believed that everything went on there as smoothly as in former times, but Edward knew that the working classes were in a fearful state of agitation. Delegates had come down from London, by Atkins's instigation, frequent meetings were held by the council of the Trades' Unions, so as to occasion a considerable expenditure of the people's money,

only for lights and beer, and several very violent debates had taken place, with regard to the expulsion of a Mr. Brown, an overseer in the works of the London Company, where Frank Bernard was employed. This Brown was a middle man; an intermediate tyrant between masters and workmen, peculiarly obnoxious to the latter.

In all these scenes of clamour and violence, Frank was opposed to Nelly's brother, Ralph Watson, a man of turbulent, head-strong character, whose sensitive self-love was easily worked upon by the subtle Atkins, to advocate the most outrageous and dangerous doctrines. Frank Bernard held many secret conferences with Edward Mallory, and guided by his advice, endeavoured to persuade the most peaceable of his comrades to resist the instigations of Atkins, and a certain methodist preacher named Foster, to arouse them to open acts of resistance and violence, which could have no other result than their own ruin. This brave fellow,

even stood forth courageously at the popular meetings, to inculcate patience and submission to present oppression, and to advise, steady perseverance in economy and education, as the only means of ultimate emancipation from the tyranny of the great capitalists. The instigators of violent insubordination, enraged that he arrested their progress, and endangered the profits they had in view, determined either to bring him over to their own opinions or to take a signal revenge.

Many private consultations were held, and the very house where Mary Thornton lodged was often the scene of nocturnal debates; for the rooms occupied by Ralph Watson, were on the ground floor. Edward, aware of this, was anxious that she should remove to some quieter dwelling, and at length came to inform her that he had found a lodging suitable for her in every respect, whither, he hoped, she would not refuse to remove, at the end of the week. Lilly was in her bed and asleep, and Mallory,

after spending an hour, in happy tranquillity with Mary Thornton, and refreshing his spirit, then weary with the turmoil of the world, in the elevating purity of her enlightened and gentle converse, had parted from her for the night; and having descended the stairs, was advancing along the narrow passage to the street, when a side-door was suddenly opened, and Ralph Watson beckoned him into the room.

The man's wife and family were probably asleep in an inner room, for in the dim light of a slender tallow candle, he could only distinguish the figures of Frank Bernard and the lawyer Atkins.

The furniture of the kitchen he entered was wretchedly scanty and poor; for turbulent men like Watson are too much engaged by public affairs, and are in too excited a state of mind to pay much attention to the comfort and welfare of their wives and families. Ralph himself looked haggard and agitated.

An old deal table stood in the middle of the floor, and two crippled chairs near it.

Atkins requested Edward to sit down, and then taking his place opposite to him he said, in a fawning voice—

"I hope, Mr. Mallory, you will excuse the liberty I take in inviting you into such a place, but my friend Frank Bernard, here, differs in many fatal points from the leaders of our party, and he tells me that he is guided by your advice. Now, I have a very high consideration for your abilities, Mr. Mallory, and I should be glad to discuss these opinions, with you, in private."

"Our club is the proper place for such debates," said Frank, drily.

"Yes, the club is the place, for you who govern the people, to talk to the people," answered the subtle informer; "but not for this gentleman and I, to enter into discussion. You may flatter your listeners at the club, Mr. Bernard, about discretion and knowledge, and

all that kind of thing, but you know, very well, all the time, they must be led by somebody. They can have no opinions but those which you, or I, or the better informed, like us, please to give them."

"I have no desire to force my opinions on my companions," was Frank's reply.

"We wish the people, to learn to form their own opinions rationally," said Mallory, calmly.

"That is impossible," returned Atkins. "I thought, that a gentleman of your education, Mr. Mallory, must know, that the mob, whether rich or poor, must be led by those who think for them. They have thus been led for time immemorial, and must ever continue to be so. It is our business, who are their leaders, to persuade them, that our thoughts are their own, and our authority is at an end, if the people discover disagreements between us."

"I am possessed of no authority," returned Edward, "nor was I aware, that our

opinions differ so widely, as to occasion any danger of dissension between us."

"We differ merely on a question of expediency," replied Atkins, blandly. "You advocate education for the people, instead of urging them to secure their political rights, and first of all, to establish their power. You inculcate patience and submission; I wish to obtain their permanent emancipation from the thralls by which they are enslaved, and when popular self-government is established by the people's charter, education will follow of course."

"I doubt it," said Mallory, calmly. "If you give the people power without knowledge, they will become the slaves of intriguers, who will make use of the ignorant and impassioned, to tyrannise over the enlightened and peaceful. Mere brute force, would gain entire mastery, and after rebellion and ruin, a return of the dominion of the sword would be the consequence."

"So much the better," muttered Ralph. "The aristocracy, who devour the bread of the people,—those mushrooms of luxury, the capitalists, who wring wealth from the starving people's toil to make them their slaves—a frozen church, whose duties are only a trade—all such abuses, would be swept away, and better days would come for old England and her sons, than they have known for the last three centuries."

"And all this you would accomplish by the sword?" demanded Edward, with an apparent simplicity, which encouraged Atkins, to a further exposition of the doctrines, which Ralph Watson had only learned from his instructions.

"Only when we find," he said, "that no other way remains open, to obtain just redress. And that will soon be the case. The workmen are impatient for a struggle, on which the future destiny of their whole class, throughout Europe, depends; they have wise leaders, who have long been labouring zealously, though

secretly, to emancipate the suffering populace of England, from the insulting charity of aristocratic philanthropists, the horrors of the Union work-houses, and the tyranny of the grinding landlords and capitalists."

"But I trust, such labourers will find their toil all vain," answered Edward. "Englishmen will not readily believe, that changes brought about by violence, must infallibly produce prosperity and happiness."

"Some may be blinded and deluded by passion," said Frank, here interposing, "but you are right, Mr. Mallory, in what you say; the greatest number of us have more sense, than to be led away by such violent notions, which can lead to nothing but ruin."

"Their sense," echoed Atkins, with a sneer.

"Surely, Mr. Mallory, you must be aware, how much the ignorant populace has need of leaders."

"They want schools much more," was the

gentleman's reply. "Englishmen have been free too long, to require the direction of fanatical, or hypocritical demagogues."

"Admirable freedom, where millions of men are denied a voice in the election of the people's representatives," cried Atkins, greatly provoked by Edward's last words. "Rely upon it, there can be no real liberty, without universal suffrage," said Ralph Watson, now interposing.

"Universal suffrage, would only be made the tool of subtle and ambitious intriguers, to raise themselves to supreme tyranny, unless men are prepared to use it wisely," returned Mallory, with deep solemnity.

"But the oppression of the poor-laws, and the unjust rate of wages,—you cannot say, that those must be supported patiently, for ever?" demanded Watson, eagerly.

"Emigrate to decraese your numbers—educate to improve your moral discipline—and associate in honest industry, and prudent

economy, to increase your moral force; these are the means, by which the evils you complain of, can best be redressed," returned Edward, in an impressive voice.

"Delusions, mere delusions," muttered Atkins, between his teeth.

"Expedients, to keep us willing slaves to the men of property," cried Watson, impatiently. "But we are not such fools, as they take us for. They live by the labours of our hands, and by heavens, they shall grant us our own terms, or we will reduce them all to beggary."

"They will starve you out first, and get other hands to supply your place," answered Mallory, promptly. "Partial combinations, and partial resistance against established powers, must be the ruin of all those engaged in them."

"This is no partial movement, Mr. Mallory," said Atkins, sharply. "Our correspondence extends over all England; our success will be

the signal for the workmen throughout the kingdom, to follow our example."

"Then the ruin will be the wider," said Edward. "You have not funds, to maintain you in idleness, for a month."

"You are misinformed there," returned the lawyer. "But you have talents worthy of our cause, Mr. Mallory, and in your circumstances, you would do wisely to join us; for when the rights of labour are established, the next point to attack, will be the rights of primogeniture."

"You are committing a great crime in endeavouring to create public disturbances," answered Edward, indignant at the insolent audacity of the artful informer. "But you are deceiving yourself and others, if you imagine, that John Bull is to be excited to revolutionary violence, and open insurrection, by the intrigues of unprincipled demagogues. Though he has yet much to learn, he has already sufficient knowledge, to despise all

brawling adventurers, who make a trade of politics."

Atkins looked exceedingly angry, and was about to reply in no measured language, when all present were startled, and further discourse was prevented, by a sharp rap at the door.

This signal was immediately followed, by the entrance of Mr. Brown, the obnoxious overseer of the works, where Frank Bernard was employed. Such men never scruple to lift the latch of the poor.

Mallory withdrew, so as to avoid observation, into a recess near the chimney, whilst Mr. Brown advanced into the room, without returning the salutations of any present.

He held a letter in his hand, and his evident ill humour rendered his plain features more than usually repulsive. He took no notice of Atkins, and he rudely pushed away a chair, which his host had civilly offered him, whilst he fixed his syes with an expression of violent indignation on Frank Bernard.

"My business here, is with you, sir," he said, addressing that quiet fellow, who heard him, with utter amazement—"my business is with you, and it is soon settled. The man who has had the audacity to write this abominable letter to my employers, accusing me of neglect and peculations, can expect nothing from me, but his immediate dismissal from our establishment."

"Sir! Mr. Brown! I have written no letter!" exclaimed Bernard, in utter astonishment.

The overseer laughed aloud.

"Of course you are prepared to deny it," he returned with a sneer, "but I do not expect truth from such as you: say what you please, your falsehoods are of no use; for the short of the matter is, there is nobody in the works who could write this letter, except yourself."

"But I am ready to give you any solemn

pledge you may require, that I did not write it," was Bernard's sole answer.

"Keep your pledges for your chartist friends," said Brown, "I don't require them; but here are your wages up to this evening," and he threw the money on the table. "You will return no more to the works."

"You do me great injustice, sir," said Frank Bernard.

"Yes, no doubt—great injustice—everything I do, and say, is unjust, in the opinion of such as you; but you must make the best of it, for all that," answered the angry overseer. "As the people, with all their clubs, and their learning, and their charter, are not the masters yet, I am determined, you shall be made an example of, and into the works you shall never set foot again, as long as I have the management there. Such conspirators must be taught to know their places."

With these words, Brown left the cottage, and banged the door violently after him.

For a few moments, Bernard stood as if stunned by what had passed; then, striking his forehead, he suddenly exclaimed—

"No, this is too bad! fifteen years, man and boy, have I worked in this establishment, and never had a bad word from the masters; and now to be slandered, and called liar to my face, and dismissed in such an insulting manner, without a hearing, by that upstart fellow, is more than I can bear."

"They are all alike," murmured Atkins, softly approaching him. "He is a fine specimen of your middle class—your enlightened middle class, which is seeking, you say, to extend the advantages it possesses, to those beneath them! He is a precious sample of the regular, respectable men of business. You see how these fellows love the people—how they honour the people—how they delight in their progress, and their prosperity; and Brown, after all, is only a miserable imitator of his employers."

"No, no," cried Frank, mastering his first feeling of irritation and despair, "all are not like him; I will never believe it. There are noble, and honest, and generous men in England, both of the highest and of the middle classes! men in government, in parliament, and in the common walks of life, who sympathise with the working people; I will not doubt the justice of all, because I am ill-used! we shall yet attain our proper social position, and the rights which should be equal to every Englishman, without overturning established order, or breaking out into open rebellion."

"You are very blind to think so," returned Atkins. "Money, and their own security, are the only objects which you liberal philanthropists have in view, when they beguile you with such hopes. Be assured, the people can never gain their rights, except by their own active resistance to oppression."

"My poor old father will be shocked when he hears of this," said Frank Bernard, as if

unconscious of all which Atkins had been saying. "Brown will take care to prevent my getting into work, anywhere in this neighbourhood, and if I must leave it, the poor old man will be heart-broken."

"Listen to me," said Atkins, "you are a clever fellow, and can have ample revenge on this paltry scoundrel, if you will only lay aside your peace notions, and be one of us. Stick fast by us and the declaration, in the squabble we are going to have with the masters, and I will insure that you shall be as well paid as if you were in constant work. Persuade all your associates to join our party; and though the aristocrats despise us now, we will soon teach them there is no greater danger than a blind confidence in untried strength."

"You may make those who trust in you your tools," returned Frank Bernard, with honest indignation; "but though your wily tongue may entice hundreds to ruin and despair, I know you too well to be made your

dupe. I comprehend, now, who wrote the letter, of which Brown accused me as the author; you wish to drive me to revolt; but I would sooner die of hunger, with my poor old father, than become one of your amalgamated dupes."

"I applaud your courage, and your firmness," said Edward Mallory, now advancing between the speakers. "If there is to be contention, for the love of heaven, let prudent and rational men give it no sanction."

"Say rather selfish and timid men," said Ralph Watson, who, during this dispute, had stood in gloomy silence.

"We will dispute no longer," rejoined Edward. "For the sake of your sister Nelly, and for your wife and family, I had hoped, Ralph Watson, that you might have listened to reason—with that hope, I came here; but if you follow the doctrines of Mr. Atkins, and persist in acting on your present opinions, I fear, before a month is past, you will have

bitter reason to repent the course you have chosen."

"I will dare the consequences," returned the man, doggedly. "Gentlemen cannot be competent judges of the interests and feelings of the working classes."

"I wish you good night, Mr. Atkins," said Mallory, now turning to the intriguing pettifogger. "A lawyer, methinks, might find a more honourable occupation than that of fomenting the angry passions of ignorant men."

"He is proud to be able to teach them how to vindicate their rights," answered Atkins, with a most hypocritical whine. "Perhaps you may want legal assistance, before long, Mr. Mallory, and if so, I hope you will remember, that I shall be ready to serve you, in spite of some rather hard names, with which you have favoured me, this evening."

When Edward Mallory left the house, Frank Bernard followed him in silence. On Nelly's

account he grieved, that her brother was the dupe of men, whose principles and promises he was convinced, could only lead him to misfortune, but he knew that further argument was vain, and gladly availed himself of the gentleman's departure, to escape from company, in every way, unpleasant to him.

"Mr. Edward," he said, after they had proceeded nearly the length of the street, "there is nothing for me now, but to go to America, with you, if you will allow me. Nelly, I am sure will be ready to follow Miss Thornton to the end of the world."

"And to be your wife at the same time, my brave fellow, I suppose, you mean," answered Edward, with a smile.

"I hope so, sir," was the workman's simple reply, "and we shall be both happy to work for you and your lady, sir, in America, till you can spare us, to begin the world on our own account."

"Very well," replied Edward, smiling, "I

shall be delighted to have such an assistant, and in the mean time, you must consider yourself, in my service. The first employment I have to give you, is to assist Nelly to remove into another lodging. Miss Thornton must leave that house, as soon as possible; for the resort of turbulent incendiaries, is not a home for her."

"They shall be removed to-morrow, sir," said Frank. "You are quite right in desiring them to quit Collard's Buildings, for I have found out, what I did not know before, sir, that Ralph Watson's house belongs to your father."

"Is it possible!" exclaimed Edward;" had I known that, I would never have allowed Miss Thornton to come there."

"It is sub-let," answered the workman, "which was the reason, that Nelly herself did not find it out, till this morniug. I shall be glad when she has left it, for I wish to avoid all chance of meeting with Ralph Watson, or any of his party again. At such a time of ex-

citement, there is no saying what might be the end of a dispute with these desperate men."

"Pay all demands, without demur," replied the gentleman, placing money in his hands.

"I will arrange about another lodging for Miss Thornton, the very first thing in the morning; therefore come to me early, to assist in removing Nelly's luggage, and giving any other help that we may want."

"Rely on me, Mr. Edward, that every thing shall be done, to your satisfaction," was the workman's simple reply, and such was Mr. Mallory's convictiou of his honesty, and zeal in his service, that he did rely on him more entirely, than if he had sworn a thousaud oaths.

CHAPTER XI.

Our life is not such as it appears to others, but such as it exists in the secret laboratory of our own thoughts and imaginations. Mary Thornton—whose father had disappeared overwhelmed with debt, driven from her home by the persecution of his creditors, and forced to seek a refuge beneath the humblest roof, under the protection of a servant girl—had a treasure of love and peace, of cheerfulness and content, in her own mind, which supplied all other deficiencies. Whilst she was an object of general compassion to those who knew her story, she was serene and hopeful; busily occupied in teaching little Lilly, and making preparations for her marriage, and her voyage, she had no

time for the discontent which idleness engenders.

The brightest hours of her existence were those when Edward Mallory came to her humble dwelling, and as she worked, she listened with delight to the expression, not only of his love for herself, but of his high thoughts, and pure benevolence. Then did her own feelings first find an echo from another's lips, and thoughts, which unexpressed, had dimly floated round her, became definite, distinct, and practical. Like a creature born in darkness, and from whose eyes, a film is suddenly removed, she saw at once, a wide expanse of knowledge opened round her, and her heart palpitated with new life, as she listened to the voice of her betrothed husband, who had wrought this change, and who was thenceforward to be her supporter and her guide, through the wilderness of life.

The outer life of Miss Parkins, on the contrary, seemed to all men bright and enviable.

Her father had for some years been reputed the richest man in the town; she was indulged, and flattered, and courted; her mother was her humble slave, who worshipped her, as an idol, and her hand was sought by the man, whom it had long been her ambition to marry. But Miss Parkins was miserable. She had no sources of happiness in herself, and depended on others, even to beguile the tedium of her idle, restless mind.

Though Oswald Mallory continued to visit almost daily at her father's house, and paid her, what young ladies consider marked attention, she could not deceive herself so far, as to believe that he either loved, or respected her. In fact, though he had been very angry with Mary Thornton, he had never ceased to love her; and when his indignation had somewhat subsided, his early passion for her returned with a force, which the opposition it had met with, had increased, instead of diminishing.

After his ideas took this turn, he was not enough of a hypocrite to treat Miss Parkins even with a show of affection. The young lady, who was shrewd enough to understand the cause of this change, reproached him, in a half joking manner, for being an incorrigible flirt. He answered sharply; and they had a violent quarrel. Miss Parkins repented of her impatience, as soon as she was alone; but the gentleman took a very different view of the case. He determined to avail himself of such a charming excuse, for withdrawing his attentions altogether. Unaccustomed to be opposed, or contradicted by any one, his feeling for Miss Parkins was no longer indifference, but hatred, after the impertinent language she had presumed to address to him; and his first desire was to revenge himself by the mortification of her pride.

Unacquainted with Sir Thomas Mallory's secret motive for pressing forward a marriage with the attorney's daughter, Mr. Oswald had

little scruple about disappointing his father, as far as mere pecuniary interests were concerned; and unable longer to play the farce of courtship, he determined, without further delay, to speak to him openly on the subject.

The first time, therefore, that this dutiful son found himself alone with the Baronet, he began at once, by saying, that he was very sorry, but that it was quite impossible for him to make up his mind to marry that vulgar plebeian, Miss Parkins; and that, he must confess, the more he had seen of her, the more detestable she had become to him.

The old Baronet looked perfectly astounded.

"I thought everything was going on very smoothly between you, Oswald," he said.

The young gentleman arose from his chair, and stood very cavalierly with his back to the fire-place.

"She is a perfect virago, sir," he said. "I have no inclination to sell myself to slavery, even for the respectable sum of fifty thousand

pounds, paid down beforehand; but allow me me to tell you, sir, that is all moonshine. Common report says, that before this day fortnight, Mr. Parkins may not be worth fifty pence. Though it seems most likely I should lose the portion, it would not be so easy to get quit of the young lady, and, therefore, it is the wisest plan, in my opinion, to have nothing to do with her."

During this speech, Sir Thomas had turned as pale as a corpse.

"How can you listen to such nonsense, Oswald?" was all he had power to say.

"Inquire, sir, inquire!" answered his son, very saucily. "The whole town knows, as well as I do, what a shrew the damsel is; and really, a man must have more courage than I have to take her to wife."

"But the money, Oswald—the money!" returned Sir Thomas, in a deprecating tone.

"Ah, as to the money, I can only say," was Oswald's reply, "that news has come down

from London, this morning, that the banking trade is in great agitation. Two Joint Stock Banks have failed, in different parts of the country; and there is no doubt, that as soon as this is generally known, there will be a tremendous run on ours, in which Parkins is deeply concerned."

"Are you sure of this?" inquired the Baronet, with great eagerness and trepidation.

"Quite sure!" answered Oswald. "I had a letter from London myself, which hinted it, and I have seen another, to an intimate friend of mine, which recounts the whole particulars and causes of the panic. In fact, I have heard, for some time, that there is great discontent amongst all parties here, who say that Parkins has abused his power, as principal shareholder in the Joint Stock Bank, to apply a large portion of the funds to his own speculations, besides accommodating his friends without security, to obtain exorbitant interest. All these loans are locked up, and are almost the same

as bad debts, so that there will be a ruinous deficiency of ready money, should there be a run on the bank. If it stops payment, every farthing of Parkins's property must go to answer for his shares. This is probably the reason, why he was so anxious to get his daughter married, with a settlement on Miss Parkins, of fifty thousand pounds. But you cannot be surprised, that I have no wish to assist this cunning gentleman to cheat his creditors."

"This is very strange," said Sir Thomas, with a very puzzled look. "It is really quite beyond my comprehension. You know, Oswald, that to meet my very pressing liabilities, I sold off railway shares last week to the amount of seven thousand pounds, at a dreadful loss, certainly, but I could not help it, and so it is useless to lament it. After my most clamorous creditors were paid, I had just three thousand pounds in hand. I had it in the house, in the iron chest; but Parkins came

here yesterday, and assured me, that the workmen were in so disturbed a state, that Stoke Court might be attacked, and it was not safe to have such a large sum by me; but that I had better put it in the bank, and I could draw it as I wanted it."

"And you took his advice?" demanded Oswald.

"How could I do otherwise," answered the old gentleman. "Parkins is my man of business, and ought to understand these matters."

"Then, my dear father," said Oswald, "the sooner you order your horse, and ride into the town to get it back again, the better. You must lose no time, but draw it all, immediately; you may otherwise never see a halfpenny of it again. Your man of business is very clever, certainly."

"But I cannot believe, that Parkins meant to deceive me," returned Sir Thomas, with his usual obstinacy; "you must be mistaken, Os-

wald, or, perhaps, you are only inventing stories, to persuade me to consent to your breaking off this marriage, which I had set my heart upon. I feel certain, if Parkins fears that the bank is in danger, he is incapable of robbing me of three thousand pounds in such a shameless manner."

"He has robbed a good many people in the course of his life, I suspect," returned the young man, sarcastically. "You will know him better before long, than to give him credit for much honesty."

"Well, I know, in some things, he is not particular," replied the Baronet, whilst rather an unpleasant recollection of certain transactions, in which he had been engaged with the attorney, crossed his mind. "But then, Oswald, I really don't believe he would cheat me."

"A very happy persuasion, sir, no doubt, as long as you don't lose three thousand pounds

by it," said Oswald, sarcastically. "But for my part, I only wish I had known him, as well as I do now, before he drew you in, to give him twenty thousand pounds for those ruinous cottages, which don't bring in so many shillings."

"Ah, that was an ugly business," returned Sir Thomas, looking very stupid. "But who could tell, when I bought them, that a Reform Bill would deprive them of all value, in less than a year after the purchase. They cost me now, for poor rates and repairs, every twelve-months, far more than they are worth; and when I spoke to Parkins lately about them, I found the tenants never pay a shilling of rent."

"I thought you intended to have them pulled down," said the young man.

"Yes, I mean to do so as soon as the tenants can be got out," answered Sir Thomas.

"If they won't go, they must be driven

out!" cried Oswald, eagerly. "I suppose, if the workmen persist in their insolent pretensions, and the demands they are pressing on the masters, the iron works will be shortly closed, and all hands dismissed; as most of these fellows live in your cottages, you may be certain, they will have no money to pay rent, and the poor rates will be doubled. You had better give me authority to clear out the houses, as soon as possible."

"Oh, you may do just as you please with these scoundrels," answered the Baronet. "I have no inclination to house and maintain all these vagabonds, who seem determined to dictate laws to everybody."

"And Miss Parkins, sir?" demanded his son.

"Oh, that is another affair," returned the Baronet. "I confess, it was never an alliance I approved of—it was beneath the dignity of our family—and, with your name and figure, Oswald, you have a right to marry well."

"I believe so, sir," answered the young man, with great self complacency.

"Yes—but—there are obstacles—very serious obstacles," said the Baronet, "very considerable difficulties in offending Mr. Parkins. Certain reasons, I confess, to you, made me agree with him, that this marriage was peculiarly desirable—and expedient. Still, if the lady is to have no portion, it would be rather a bore. We had better temporise a little, and see how the affairs of the bank turn out. I don't exactly like to quarrel with Parkins; he has often been ready to accommodate me with money, and he has heavy claims, which I am not exactly prepared to meet."

"But you say you have three thousand pounds in the bank," persisted Oswald, "and the interest on the mortgages was all paid up by the last rents, so you are safe for a time, at least."

"Very true—very true—" muttered Sir Thomas, "but still, Oswald, our affairs are

much mixed up with this man's speculations. We have shares in the iron works—and they talk of great losses there—I don't understand these things, but Parkins does, and looks after my interest. I should be very unwilling to offend him."

"I am very sorry, sir, to find that you are so much involved with this crafty lawyer," said Oswald. "I have never liked him; he was much too cringing formerly, and now his manners have become very impertinent, and have a sneering servility about them, which I think detestable. There are some very odd stories in circulation concerning him, and one person has hinted to me that he is likely to be largely compromised, in consequence of being engaged for himself, or others, in a most extensive smuggling transaction. It might prove very unpleasant to have our names mixed up with his, and I can only add, that in consequence of all I have recently heard, I am resolved not to compromise myself, by forming a matrimonial

connection with such a disreputable set, even if the girl had a hundred thousand pounds in hand."

Sir Thomas walked up and down the room, in a very pompous manner, and more than once cleared his throat, as if about to speak; he was very much annoyed by Oswald's conduct, but for reasons very different from those he had ostensibly given, and though a tyrant to every one else, he never had courage to resist the wishes of his eldest son.

"Well, temporise a short time longer, Oswald," he said, at length. "You need not decidedly neglect Miss Parkins, for a week or two; a great deal may happen in that time, and then we can be guided by circumstances."

"Very well, sir," answered his son, "if you wish for delay, so very decidedly, I cannot refuse you. I will do my best to keep up appearances, a little longer; but I assure you it is confoundedly difficult to say soft things to

such a mass of vulgar affectation and ugliness as Miss Parkins."

"I am afraid, Oswald," returned Sir Thomas, though he was somewhat alarmed at his audacity, in alluding to the subject, "I am very much afraid you are still thinking of that little doll, Mary Thornton."

"Very likely I am, sir, and what then?" was the insolent rejoinder.

"What then! Why then the sooner you put her out of your head the better," cried the old man, with unusual anger, "for by heaven, Oswald, I would sooner see you dead than married to her."

The young man made no reply, but whistling an air with affected carelessness, he walked out of the room. He then sauntered to the stables, and after half an hour's conference with his groom, he mounted his favorite horse, a superb hunter, which was yet unpaid for, and rode into the town of S——, not to visit his bride-elect, as Sir Thomas Mallory hoped, but

to pursue his search for Mary Thornton, whose place of refuge he had previously failed to discover.

His pride was as much mortified as his love, by the idea that she should escape him; he was determined, if possible, to prevent her becoming his brother's wife, even if his own efforts to obtain her proved for ever fruitless. In pursuance of this object, he was zealously aided by the lawyer, Atkins, who was willing to serve any one for money, and with whom he was more intimate than he was willing should be known to the world. From this man, he had heard of Thornton's having been seen on the North Cliff, though nothing was said of the interview with Parkins, at Carnaby's Inn. And from him, likewise, he learnt that Edward Mallory had been that night, as Atkins naturally supposed, in Thornton's company; he had every reason to believe, therefore, that his brother was in some manner connected with the disappearance of the Custon-House Officer.

The lawyer was too cunning even to hint a suspicion that Edward had been engaged in any unlawful or violent act, either before or after this untimely meeting; but by looks and manner, he adroitly conveyed this impression to the minds of his hearers, without compromising himself; and Oswald trusted that a story, very much to his brother's disadvantage, magnified by every repetition, might finally be related to Miss Thornton, and cause suspicions and misunderstandings between her, and her betrothed husband.

That day he learnt, to his great exultation, that Mary was lodging in Ralph Watson's house. She had been discovered by Atkins, on his visit there the previous evening, and no sooner had the wily informer communicated this to Oswald, than he hastened eagerly to Collard's buildings in quest of her.

He there found the workman's house in the greatest confusion. By Mr. Parkins's orders, the iron works had been that morning closed,

and the masters, instead of accepting the terms proposed by the men, had themselves issued a sort of bill of rights, and had declared that no one should be received into their employment who did not consent to sign what the men indignantly called a bond of slavery.

Ralph Watson was from home, discussing with his companions this new act of their employers, at which all were indignant; little suspecting how much their false friend, Atkins, had to do with it. But the wife of this misguided man, who had, in fact, by his violent and intemperate language and extreme opinions, greatly contributed to throw himself and his fellow-labourers out of employment, the mother of his children, a hard-working, anxious woman, was in the house. Fully sensible of all the misery which awaited himself and her young family, she was sitting with a child hanging at her breast, weeping bitterly, when Oswald entered.

With some difficulty he learnt from her

that her husband's sister, Nelly, and the young lady with her, had removed from the rooms up-stairs, at an early hour that morning, without saying where they were going.

"She had no doubt," she said, "that they were aware that hard times were coming for the workmen and their families, and had left the neighbourhood in consequence. She had understood they intended very shortly to sail for America, and it was very likely they had gone at once on board of ship. She only wished that she could get there too, with her poor starving children."

"The workmen are insolent vagabonds," replied Oswald, enraged by this intelligence. "It is time they were taught they are not to be every body's masters. They will have a good lesson now, I hope, and most richly deserve it. So, you know nothing where these women are gone?"

"I have something else to do, with five small children, and a husband out of work,

and something else to think of, than playing the spy on my neighbours, for such as you, who rob us all of our bread," cried the woman, now in her turn, aroused to indignation, by Mallory's insulting language. "I know you now, sir! your father's name is the first on the list, at the bottom of the paper the workmen are so angry about, and it is well for you, my husband is not at home. I advise you to get out of the neighbourhood, as fast as you can, for there are many here who say your father does nothing but what you command him. We want none of you proud gentry here."

"You can be as insolent as your husband, it appears," said Oswald, with great severity, "but when we have got fresh hands at all the works, you will be submissive enough."

"Aye, threaten!" cried the woman, indignantly, "we know well enough, that if we all died of starvation, you would rejoice that the population and poor-rates were diminished; but

times will alter soon. You have your day now, but ours will come before long!"

In such a strain Ralph Watson's wife continued to upbraid, and becoming every moment louder and louder in her wrath, Oswald gave up the contest, and retreated, as rapidly as possible, not only from the house, but as she had advised him, from the neighbourhood. In fact, such was the general excitement and the indignation of the workmen and their families, against their employers, that his dress of a gentleman was sufficient to draw upon him rude words of reproach from the women, and lowering looks from the discarded labourers, who were standing together at the end of the narrow lanes, or the doors of public-houses, discussing the new turn in their affairs.

Though no coward, the angry and turbulent character of the whole population made him feel greatly relieved when he approached the better part of the town. But before he arrived

there he had to pass the police-court, where the magistrates were sitting to administer justice.

These judicial proceedings usually attracted very little attention, but this morning he saw from some distance that there was a dense crowd gathered round the doors of the building, as if some highly interesting case was under examination. Two policemen were standing like statues of patience, watching with immoveable countenances, the heaving and pushing of the eager throng, and never interfering except when absolutely necessary to prevent a breach of the peace. The mob was of a very motly character; there were slattern women in crushed bonnets and colourless shawls; pale, dirty frequenters of gin-shops, in threadbare coats; sturdy labourers in their working dresses; and children of all ages, in polkas and short petticoats, very fashionable and exceedingly dirty.

Mallory, who had a perfect horror of all such assemblies, was considering how he should pro-

ceed, without passing through the crowded street, when a loud shout within the building, round which the people had eagerly gathered, was echoed by a universal hurrah on the outside, and two strong iron-founders rushed from the door of the police-office, carrying a man in triumph, on their shoulders.

"Bravo, Mat Fuller," cried fifty voices at once.

"Mat's come out in a new character," roared others; and then the whole mob laughed in chorus, as they ran straggling after the player and his supporters.

Whilst the exultation of the mob expressed itself by every variety of voice, and hats were thrown up in the air, and even little girls of six years old carrying babies nearly as big as themselves, endeavoured to keep up with the procession, Fuller was repeatedly bowing most courteously to all around.

"Thanks—thanks, ladies and gentlemen," he said, in a true, theatrical tone, "I really

feel totally overpowered by this most gratifying, and allow me to add, unexpected, and unmerited reception. Never had so large an audience in my life before; and it is a proud satisfaction to be welcomed by universal approbation. Believe me, it shall henceforth be my study, as it has ever been, to merit your applause."

Mr. Oswald Mallory was much provoked, that he was so hemmed in, by above a dozen women, of not a very prepossessing appearance, as to be unable to proceed, and was thus compelled to hear the whole of this address, and the loud shout of the delighted populace, at its conclusion.

Mat Fuller then insisted on descending from his exalted position, and, when fairly on the ground, shook hands with several old acquaintances, whom he recognised amongst his followers, and thanking the people once more, for the interest they had shown in his liberation, he

begged them to disperse, and leave him at liberty to return quietly to his home.

"What does all this mean?" enquired Oswald, who had not recognised the player, of a sailor standing near him.

"That man, sir," he replied, "is the actor, Mathew Fuller, whom the manager accused of setting fire to the play booth, in the fair week. But the charge was all a lie, it appears; and some man has come to-day, and sworn that Fuller was with him in the Black Bull Inn, during a whole hour before the fire began, and that he jumped up in the greatest surprise and fright, when he heard of it, having left his child in the theatre. The people took a great interest about him, poor fellow; for, I suppose you have heard, sir, how his little girl was saved from the flames by the gallantry of Mr. Edward Mallory, the Baronet's youngest son."

"I fancy, from all I have heard, it is more

than the eldest would have done," said the rough voice of a man, who stood close behind Oswald.

The gentleman turned, and recognised the speaker to be Captain Blake.

"Do you mean to insult me, sir?" demanded Mallory, haughtily, whilst his face flushed of a scarlet hue.

"Just as you please, Mr. Oswald," said the seaman, with a light laugh. "A man is indeed to be pitied, to whom truth is an insult."

Oswald looked round; the audience did not please him; he pretended, therefore, not to hear Blake's last words, and turning his back upon him, pushed his way, as rapidly as he was able, through the crowd, which was now dispersing.

By this he avoided a meeting with his brother Edward and Mr. Gerard, who almost immediately afterwards, came up to Blake.

They both shook hands with him, and thanked him warmly, for the valuable assistance he had given them, by collecting testimony in Fuller's favour, which, when combined with the evidence of the manager, who had been brought, at Mr. Gerard's expense, from a distant part of England, had sufficed to establish, beyond all dispute, the entire innocence of the poor actor, of all the charges brought against him, and to interest the public generally in his behalf.

Mr. Parkins had thought it prudent to absent himself from the examination that day, and even the sophistry of Atkins, who acted by his instigation, was unequal to prove Fuller's guilt, or to induce the magistrates to commit him for trial.

They had unanimously declared, that not the slightest grounds for suspicion could be proved against him, and given orders that he should be forthwith discharged.

When Fuller, at length, found himself released from the overwhelming attentions of the

multitude, he looked eagerly round for the gentlemen, to whose zealous services he knew well that he was wholly indebted for his liberation.

Edward Mallory, Mr. Gerard, and Blake, all shook him cordially by the hand, whilst he expressed his gratitude to them, in broken and agitated words, and then eagerly enquired for his little girl.

As Lilly had been the poor father's last thought, when taken into custody, she was his first anxiety, when released.

"Your little girl is well, and happy," answered Edward, deeply touched by Fuller's tremulous inquiry.

"Has she, then, so soon forgotten her father?" said the poor fellow, sadly.

"No, no—have no fear of that!" returned Mallory. "Her affection is not of so light a character. Lilly has never ceased talking of you; and each day retired to rest with the hope of seeing you on the morrow."

"Dear child," murmured the actor; and his eyes glistened with tears of pleasure. "Does she know, that to-day was to decide my fate?"

"We told her nothing, which would add to her anxiety," was the reply; "and we feared to excite either her hopes or her fears, when we were still uncertain of the result."

"Shall I go forward, and tell her you are coming?" said Blake.

"No, no," returned Fuller, in a low voice. "But, Mr. Edward, you would confer a great favour on me, if you would allow me to meet her, for the first time, alone. It is not always that a man can put a proper restraint upon his feelings; and, in fact, I have suffered so much, I should be glad to have no occasion to suppress my joy."

"I understand you," answered Mallory, pressing Fuller's hand.

Mr. Gerard stood silently observing all that passed, without appearing to notice Blake, for

having returned to S—— only on the preceding evening, Edward Mallory had not yet had an opportunity of relating to him, the various circumstances which had occurred, to alter his opinion of the seaman, and though the worthy merchant, pleased by his conduct that morning, had thanked him sincerely, for the trouble he had taken in Fuller's behalf, he was not desirous of encouraging any further intimacy with him.

Edward understood all this, and anxious to spare Blake all unnecessary mortification, he turned to Mr. Gerard, and said, he should take the liberty of calling on him, to have some conversation with him, on several subjects of importance; and he trusted, that he would now excuse his leaving him, as he was anxious to accompany Fuller to Miss Thornton's new abode.

Mr. Gerard at once agreed to this arrangement, and wishing Blake and the actor a good morning, he shood hands with Edward Mallory,

and said he should be glad if he would come to him that afternoon. He then departed; and the seaman, anxious to escape from Fuller's reiterated expressions of gratitude, turned down the first street which crossed their path, leaving Edward and the actor to pursue their way alone in quest of little Lilly.

"You know, I suppose, that your little girl has resided with Miss Thornton during your absence?" said the young man, then first addressing his companion without reserve.

"No, I did not," was the answer of the player. "Heaven bless and reward her for such charity. Oh, Mr. Edward, though I have had a sad experience of the vices of the world —though I have seen wickedness, until my heart despaired, and the sins of my own life, made me tremble, when I remembered that judgment awaited all the children of the earth; since I met you, I have learnt that there are still noble and generous beings on earth, who

live only to lessen the sufferings of their fellow creatures, and lead despairing sinners, by their example, to strive, with repentance, once more to retrieve their fatal errors."

"Preserve this frame of mind, Fuller," answered Mallory, solemnly; "renounce, for the future, the vices which have brought you to the brink of ruin—persevere in proving your reformation, by honest and healthy activity, and never forget, for the future, that not only your own welfare, but that of your child, depends upon your conduct. The world, however heartless, can do a man little injury, if he is strong against its evil temptations. But we are now near Miss Thornton's present abode," he said, suddenly changing the subject, and pointing to a neat, small house, with a garden before it on a rising ground, above the end of Collard's Buildings, and commanding a view down that street, and far away over the town and harbour. "That is the house with the green shutters; and if you will wait a few

minutes here, before the door, I will go in, and arrange for you to meet Lilly alone."

"But do not say a word about my coming," was the poor father's request.

"Surely it is wrong to surprise her," answered Edward. "The shock of seeing you unexpectedly, might be too much for her."

"If you think so, perhaps you had better tell her, that I shall return to-day," said Fuller, anxiously. "Dear child!—dear child! that is her voice. I hear her laughing merrily. Oh, this is too much—too much."

Mallory no longer tarried; he saw that the actor's suspense must not be prolonged, and hurrying into the house, where Mary dwelt with her young companion, he ascended the stairs at once, to the little room they occupied on the first floor.

"Oh, it is Mr. Edward—dear Mr. Edward," cried Lilly, jumping up, and clapping her hands, the moment he appeared. "I am so glad you are come to see what a beautiful

house Miss Thornton has been drawing for me."

Mary arose, and held out her hand to Edward, with a smile of unutterable confidence and love.

"What news?" she said, though she, at once, understood, from his countenance, that Fuller—in whose fate they had both taken a deep interest—was again at liberty.

"Good," he replied, "very good."

"Good news—good news!" cried the child, "that must mean, that father is coming back again. Oh, I am sure he is, you do look so very happy."

"Shall you be glad to see him to-day, Lilly?" asked Mallory, smiling on her, as he stroked down her curling hair with gentle affection.

"He is coming!—oh, I am sure he is coming!" she cried, turning suddenly pale with agitation; and then she laughed though her eyes were full of tears. "Oh, take me to

father, if you can—do, do let me see him—do let me go to him."

"My dear child, it is impossible that I can take you to him," answered Mallory; "but if you are very good and patient, he will come to you before long."

"Oh, sir—how long?—indeed, indeed, I am very patient," and she began to weep outright.

"If you will promise me to stay in this room five minutes by yourself, whilst I speak to Miss Thornton in the next room, I will engage that your father shall come to you in less than half an hour."

"I will stay five minutes—ten minutes—a quarter of an hour. Oh, I will be so still, if you are sure that father will come at last," answered the child, eagerly.

"I am quite sure," was Edward's reply.

Miss Thornton bent down and kissed the pretty little face glowing with inexpressible delight, though wet with tears, which was held

up to her; and then, in obedience to Mallory's wish, though ignorant of his reason for desiring her absence, she accompanied him out of the room.

Fuller was already standing, with impatience and anxiety, at the head of the stairs.

"Is she alone?" he demanded, in a very nervous voice, and the agitated expression of his countenance, when, in obedience to a sign from Mallory, he rushed past them into the room they had left, at once explained to Mary why she had been brought away.

And Fuller had judged wisely; great joy, as well as great sorrow, should be veiled, like a holy mystery, even from the eyes of sympathising friends. Strong feelings should have no witnesses; the moments of their highest excitement are rare upon earth, and should ever be held sacred.

None had ever known the intense mental agony which that poor man had endured in prison, when separated from his child, and

sunk, as he considered, to the lowest depths of disgrace, on account of being charged with a crime of which he was perfectly innocent; none, whose affections were less ardent, could fully comprehend his almost delirious joy, when re-united to the idol of his heart.

No eye beheld, no ear ever heard, what passed between the actor and his child, during the hour that they were alone together; but Fuller, from that time, was an altered man. The superstitious might have believed, that he had held commune, the while, with a heavenly visitant, so changed was his whole character; nor would they have greatly erred, for surely, the purifying influence of heaven is felt on earth, through the medium of our best affections.

As Edward and Mary Thornton glided softly down the stairs, the young man took the hand of his companion, and pressed it in silence. They both felt, that what his child was to Fuller, they were to each other.

CHAPTER XII.

The evening after Fuller's liberation, Edward Mallory, at length, found an opportunity of conversing with him in private, concerning the business, about which the actor had written to him in London. It was, indeed, a matter of great importance, the public disclosure of which might entail such serious consequences on those concerned in it, that it was not wonderful, if Parkins entertained the slightest suspicion of Fuller's being acquainted with the facts he communicated to Edward, that he had commissioned Atkins to devise some expedient for the removal of so dangerous a witness.

But there were many circumstances con-

nected with this affair, which it was so painful to Mallory to hear recounted, even in private, that his first request to Fuller, after he had heard the whole of the details, was, that he would remain perfectly silent to every one else on the subject.

As far as his own interest was concerned, he said, he was perfectly ready to make any sacrifice, rather than publish a story to the world, which would tend to criminate his nearest relative, though he admitted that circumstances might occur, when the justice due to another would render concealment impossible.

The actor's sense of obligation to Edward Mallory was too great for him to refuse compliance with his request, though he grieved, that the fraud, which he had it in his power to expose, and to bring home to its perpetrators, by undeniable evidence, should thus be allowed to go unpunished.

But there was one person to whom Edward

longed to repeat the story he had heard, and that was Mr. Gerard, on whose friendship and secresy he knew he could entirely rely. But even to him, a feeling of duty kept him silent on this subject; and when he visited him at the hour he had appointed, he spoke to him only concerning the affairs of Thornton, and the circumstances which had occurred to alter his opinion of Captain Blake.

Mr. Gerard was a man entirely free from prejudice, and his clear mind was so open to conviction, and he was so glad, at all times, to be able to think well of his fellow creatures, that he did not hesitate to lend a ready credence to Edward's evidence in favour of the seaman, and, at once, admitted, that his whole conduct towards the Custom-House Officer proved him to be zealous and disinterested in the service of a friend. He allowed that age and adversity might have softened the natural impetuosity of Blake's character, and the circumstances he had related to Edward, might,

if true, be received in extenuation of his apparent misconduct towards his wife. He, at the same time, advised the young man not to be led into an imprudent intimacy, by a hasty impulse of generosity; but like himself, discarding all prejudice, to be guided by further experience in his estimation of the character of Blake.

Oswald Mallory heard, with extreme annoyance, of his brother's intimacy with Mr. Gerard; for he was well aware, that the moral influence of that gentleman in the town and neighbourhood, far surpassed that of the Baronet, or any of his evil agents, and would, probably, suffice to protect, from his machinations, all those against whom he was thirsting for revenge.

He had never dared openly to confess his mad passion for Mary Thornton to his father, neither had he spoken to him of his meeting with his brother, nor of the execution in the house of the Custom-House Officer. He was

exceedingly indignant when he found that Thornton's friends had come forward to pay his debts, and the suspicion that Edward had furnished the money, or induced others to do so, increased his hatred, and his indignation against his brother. Disappointed in his efforts to discover the residence of Mary Thornton, and his claims on her father being paid off, he eagerly listened to the hints which Atkins adroitly threw out, that the disappearance of Thornton was in consequence of some smuggling transaction, of which, could Oswald obtain sufficient evidence, he would have the unfortunate man entirely in his power.

The pettifogger's engagements to Parkins prevented his disclosing more of the conversation he had overheard at Carnaby's Inn; but Mallory's suspicions thus directed, he soon discovered other circumstances with regard to Thornton's previous conduct, which were sufficient for his purpose. It was, indeed, too true, that this man, dragged down by his vices into

the quagmire of dissipation, had, whilst still trusted by his superiors in office, committed various petty acts of deception, of which suspicion was, at length, excited; but, as there was no positive evidence of criminality, his dismissal from the service of the Custom House had been considered to be sufficient punishment.

Oswald, by Atkins's instigation, was convinced that much use might be made of these charges, to terrify the discarded functionary, and to frighten him into compliance with any demands which he pleased to impose on him.

The only obstacle to the execution of this project was, that Thornton was no where to be found. His place of concealment still remained a secret to his friends as well as his enemies.

Miss Thornton, at length, became so uneasy at her father's protracted silence, that even the consolations of Edward failed to allay the apprehensions it excited in her mind.

Nelly heard daily from Frank Bernard the various reports circulated in the town, with regard to her master's disappearance; and, amongst others, the suspicions of Edward Mallory, which Atkins had adroitly excited, did not fail to reach her ears. But these two honest people were sufficiently well acquainted with that gentleman, to regard every whisper to his discredit as the mere invention of malignity, and sufficiently discreet, never to repeat to Miss Thornton a word of these invidious falsehoods. As she seldom left the house, and rarely spoke with any one from the town, except Fuller, who came daily to visit his child, they hoped there was little danger of her learning them in any other way.

Nelly took an early opportunity of giving the actor a caution on the subject; but this was totally unnecessary, for so fervent was the gratitude he everywhere expressed for his benefactor, that no one, with whom he associated, had ever ventured to repeat to him the

stories in circulation, to Edward's disadvantage.

Day by day, as by Mallory's judicious and confiding kindness, the poor player was led back into the paths of virtue, and honest hopes like guiding stars, by this friendly influence, broke through the dark thoughts which long benumbed his moral energies, Fuller's love for the man, who disregarding the prejudices of others, had dared to stretch out his hand to rescue him from the social obloquy in which his follies and his despair had involved him, became more devoted and more engrossing. With inexpressible gratitude, he accepted Edward's invitation to accompany him to America; nor did he hesitate to part from Lilly, the dearest object of his soul, when Mallory proposed, that she should for the present remain under Miss Thornton's care, in order that she might continue to profit by the instruction, which Mary took pleasure in giving her.

Mr. Gerard, after his return from London, had objected, as much as Mallory had previously done, to the poverty of Mary Thornton's abode; but she would not consent to leave it, giving to both the same reply, that she would never consent to enjoy luxuries at the expense of others.

The small lodging she occupied, was in a neat, two storied cottage, occupied by a sailor's widow, on a rising green above the end of Collard's Buildings; a few trees grew around it, and the breezes from the upper downs, to which it was exposed, made it fresher and healthier, than in the lower streets of the town.

The little sitting room where she and Edward Mallory enjoyed the happy meetings of early courtship, was without carpet, and a few chairs, and a couple of tables, were its only furniture; but little Lilly went out to the fields with Nelly, or her father, and brought home wild-flowers, and branches of dog-roses, to fill up

the grate, and Mary put up white curtains, and hung her parrot's cage in the window, and placed the few books she possessed on a shelf, and when she sat at her work with the little girl beside her, dressed in clean, but plain attire, a prettier picture of English humble life could not have been seen.

As Mary prepared the linen for her distant home, she had many pleasant thoughts of her future married life with Edward, far away from the insulting pride of money, which in England had inflicted, even on her unobtrusive spirit, many sharp, and ruthless wounds. Though her fancy might too much embellish the charms of that distant land, and the future might possibly prove less bright than she anticipated, all for the present was summer in her trusting heart, and she felt that the sun would be warmer, and the breezes fresher in the distant home of her betrothed husband.

These were silent thoughts; but at other times, Mary talked in such glowing language

to Lilly, of America, of its flowers, and its forests, and its rushing floods, that the child, as she listened, believed it fairy-land, and daily became more impatient for their departure.

It was a sultry summer evening, and Miss Thornton and her little companion had put on their bonnets, and were waiting for Edward Mallory to take them a quiet walk amongst the rocks, by the sea-side, when there was a light tap at the room door. Mary opened it, and a little boy, the son of Ralph Watson, who stood without, put a letter in her hand, which he said, had been sent for her to his father's and then ran down stairs again, without waiting to be questioned further.

She supposed it to be another of her father's bills, many of which had previously been thus sent to her, and was much surprised, when she saw that it was directed to herself; sitting down, therefore, she broke it open, and hastily glanced over its contents. She had scarcely perused three lines, when her face became sud-

denly as pale as death, and her hand in which she held the paper, shook with agitation. Even Lilly was struck with terror, at the change in her appearance, and creeping close to her, watched her in silence.

"No! no! it cannot be! it is a vile, an infamous slander," exclaimed Miss Thornton, with a sudden change of expression; and folding up the paper, she flung it from her, with contemptuous indignation. It was an anonymous letter, written, in order to impress on Mary's mind, the belief, that Edward Mallory was criminally implicated in the mysterious disappearance of her father; but though composed with consummate art, Mary had too entire a confidence in the character of her betrothed, to feel any thing but horror, for such a vile production. She shrunk from the conviction thus forced upon her, that any living man could be capable of such a wicked fabrication, as the charges it contained, and of maliciously communicating them to her.

Then came the thought, of how she had provoked such enmity, and wonder, who could be the author of the letter. Involuntarily she seemed to see the figure of Oswald Mallory, stand menacing before her, and his threats of vengeance again rang in her ears. It was fearful to believe, that he could thus in the blind fury of passion, seek the ruin of his own brother; and yet Mary smiled at his impotent folly, in believing for a moment, that she was weak enough to be deceived by an accusation so improbable.

"There is Mr. Mallory coming for us," said little Lilly, after standing in silent anxiety for nearly half-an-hour; and steps were indeed audible on the narrow stairs.

Mary Thornton snatched up the letter, and thrust it quickly under her work, which lay on the table. Her first thought was, to spare Edward the agony of knowing his brother's wickedness. In another moment, the door was opened, and her promised husband entered the

room, his bright countenance glowing with health, and animated by love and joy.

"Well done," he cried, "I am glad to see you both ready, for it is a glorious evening, and the tide is coming in fast. I know, Mary, you like to see the water dashing in amongst the rocks, and we shall just get there in time. But you look ill, dearest, you are pale and agitated. Has anything occurred to distress you? Have you had any tidings, bad tidings, perhaps, of your father?"

"Oh, no—nothing," murmured the girl, with as much composure as she could command. "I shall soon be better, when I feel the fresh sea air."

"Then you are ill?" returned her lover, watching her changing countenance with increased anxiety. "Something has alarmed you.—Tell me, for Heaven's sake, what has happened."

"Nothing has happened, dear Edward," said Mary, with visible embarrassment, for she was

totally unused to utter even a prevarication. "Don't ask me any questions, and I shall soon be quite well again, now you are with me."

"Mary—Mary—is it possible that you have concealments from me?" demanded Edward, in a tone of reproach. "Is this the confidence we have promised ever to maintain inviolate towards each other?"

Mary, totally overcome, covered her face with her handkerchief, and burst into tears.

"Lilly, what does all this mean?" enquired the young man, turning towards the child. "You, at least, I hope, will tell me the truth! Has any one been here?"

"Yes, sir," answered the little girl, after vainly looking at Miss Thornton, to discover, if possible, whether she wished her to be silent or not. "A boy brought a letter, sir," she added, with some hesitation.

"A letter!" exclaimed Edward. "Why all this mystery, about a letter? Mary, if you have received intelligence of your father, what

need can there be for your concealing it from me?"

"Indeed—indeed," she replied, "I have heard nothing of my father; and be sure, Edward, if I conceal anything from you, I have no bad motive."

"But why make a secret even of your grief?" was the reply. "Am I not to be the partner of your sorrow, as well as of your joy. Without that, how, think you, there can be perfect, enduring love between us?"

Mary made no answer. She longed to say, "spare me, only this once;" but she dreaded to utter the words.

At this moment, as Mallory, somewhat impatiently moved from her, he brushed her work from the table, and it slipped down to the ground. The letter fell upon it. Edward's quick eye instantly perceived it, and he took it up; but Mary no sooner saw it in his hand, than she rushed forward, and before he had glanced at the direction, snatched it from him,

and sunk back in her chair, overpowered with emotion.

"What, Miss Thornton," he said, "is it possible that you have a correspondent whose writing even you are afraid I should recognise? Is it possible, that she whom my heart selected from a deep conviction of her innocence and her purity, is engaged in a clandestine correspondence with another, whilst she is cheating me with a pretended affection? Mary, Mary, if you are deceiving me, you will have much to answer for."

"Oh, spare me—spare me, such cruel reproaches! Indeed, I do not merit them!" answered the girl, no longer weeping, but gazing with intense agony on Edward, whose countenance expressed a calm severity, which terrified her, far more than any anger could have done. Then had she first experience of the deep suffering, without which, no passionate love exists. Her heart had, till then, known only its joy.

"And can you expect me to place reliance on your assertions, when you actually hold in your hand the evidence of their falsehood?" demanded Mallory, in a voice of indignation.

"Oh, Heaven, pardon me—this is insupportable," murmured Mary, unable longer to bear her lover's unjust accusation. "When you know all, Edward, you will be sorry you have spoken so harshly, for, indeed, I meant nothing wrong. Read that, if nothing else will assure you of the sincerity of my love. I did not think you could have mistrusted me so easily."

And as she ceased speaking, she placed the letter, with trembling fingers, in his hand.

He glanced at the direction, with the same stern countenance as before; it was evident he did not recognise the hand-writing. Mary gazed eagerly at him, when he opened it, and his eyes ran rapidly from line to line. But her suspense was short, for scarcely a minute elapsed, before, casting the letter from him, he seized her hand, and wildly exclaimed—

"Oh, Mary, Mary, how undeserving I am of your love! dear angel, you sought to spare me pain, and I have requited you with suspicions—with anger—with injustice! Can you forgive me, dearest?"

"If you have already forgiven me," answered the girl, with a gentle smile, which inflicted a deeper pang on Edward's heart than any reproaches could have done.

An expression of passionate tenderness was his only reply.

"Has that vile letter excited no suspicions in your heart, Mary?" he then demanded.

"Edward," she said, "do you suppose it possible that I could think you capable of crime? No; I would sooner be parted from you for ever."

"Heaven bless you!" exclaimed Mallory, fervently, and his eyes filled with tears as he gazed at this pretty trusting creature, with wonder and admiration. "Every day teaches me better to know the value of the treasure I

possess in your love. I sought you, Mary, as a fair, industrious, happy-tempered girl, but I have seen, developed by misfortune, in your heart, all the noblest qualities, which man can venerate in woman. Whilst we confide in each other, no enemy can blight our happiness, nor have we, I trust, any enemy, save one, upon earth."

"And from him comes that cruel letter," she returned in low accents.

"Yes," rejoined Edward, "and though it is fearful to think so, I cannot doubt that this scrawl is written by my brother's own hand or by his dictation."

"I never doubted it," was Mary's reply.

"It would indeed have been fearful," said her lover, "if, aided by my own impetuous temper, he had succeeded in exciting dissension between us."

"It was but a moment of misapprehension, and it is past for ever! We will speak no more of it," returned the girl, gently.

"Yet before we are silent on the subject," replied Mallory, "I must now tell what I have hitherto anxiously concealed from you, and confess that reports of a most painful nature, such as this letter mentions, joining my name in a mysterious manner with stories of your father's disappearance, have for some time been circulated in the town. I am convinced that the only way effectually to put a stop to them, is for Mr. Thornton to return; but though I have made the most earnest endeavours to discover him, I have hitherto failed to do so."

"Can Captain Blake give no clue to his place of concealment?" demanded the girl.

"None, whatever!" was the reply." When they parted, Mr. Thornton promised to write to him, in a day or two, and so long a time has now elapsed since his departure, that he is becoming both anxious and impatient at his silence. He is inclined to think that he went to some distance by the railroad, the night we

parted on the cliffs, but even of that, he has no certain knowledge."

"I have for some time been uneasy, on my father's account," said Miss Thornton, "though totally unconscious of the injurious suspicions to which his prolonged absence had exposed you; but now, when I know the whole truth, I feel doubly distressed by his silence. No pains must be spared to bring him back to prove, as quickly as possible, the wickedness and falsehood of the slanders which have been spread abroad."

"Mathew Fuller knows many places in this town where I should be sorry to enter," returned Edward; "for several days he has been making most diligent enquiries; but hitherto entirely in vain. He is now employed on such an errand, and I only left him to escort you on your promised walk to the sea-shore. I understand that Oswald has ridden over to the next town, so there is no fear of our encountering him."

"I see Lilly is impatient for the promised walk," answered the girl, "and the sky is so bright, that I long to see her dancing, as I once did myself, upon the smooth sea-shore."

To this appeal there could be no denial, and the little party, happy in each other's love, then left the house together.

During the commencement of their walk, whilst they passed through the crowded and busy streets, they spoke seldom to each other, although there were probably few hearts so happy as theirs, amidst all the crowds which they met. But their joy was no longer a light and careless feeling, like that of little Lilly, when she reached the sea sands, and gambolled forward after the receding waves, to escape with difficulty, as they rapidly returned upon her. Sometimes caught in a shower of spray, she laughed with the wildest delight, at others she forgot even the glittering waters, whilst

intent as any treasure seeker, she sought for the small shells along the dimpled sands.

In every human being, the divinity has implanted some perception of moral and physical beauty, a type of eternal perfection; all children, as by a natural impulse, delight in the flowers of earth and the wonders of the sea; when they have no longer pleasure in the primroses, and the cowslip, and the sparkling waves, and the shells and the weeds on their shore, the days of innocence are already past. The body is asserting its dominion over the soul. But to little Lilly, that hour had not yet come. She had still pleasure in a thousand things, to which her own innocence imparted the sole value.

Edward and Mary watched her sportive gambols with pleasure, for she recalled to them the hours of childhood thy had spent together, in the same happy manner; and when they were weary of looking at her, they went and

sat down upon the rocks, from whence they had a pleasant view over the broad and tranquil ocean, now reflecting in many varied tints, the light of the declining sun.

About two hours before its setting, they were joined by Mathew Fuller, who came, he said, to prevent his little girl being troublesome. The truth was, the poor fellow having been disappointed in his search for Thornton, and having nothing to do that day for Mr. Edward Mallory, was fearful, if he remained idle and solitary in the town, that he might yield to the old temptation of the ale house, and hurried to rejoin those who had led him back to higher and better thoughts, and to the peace which waits on honest virtuous industry.

So genial is nature's influence over all who seek her in sincerity and truth, that whilst joining in the sports of his child, on the wide sea beach, with the glorious beauty of its heaving waters before his eyes, and the soothing murmur of the wind and tide, sounding

like measured music all around him, he soon forgot the craving of old habit, and exulting in his triumph over evil, felt himself a better and a happier man than he had done for many years before.

THE END OF VOL. II.

T. C. Newby, Printer, 30, Welbeck Street, Cavendish Square.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA
3 0112 041674646